

*The PREAMBLE to the Act of Parliament for appointing a FAST on the 6th of February, 1756.*

**F**OR imploring a blessing from Almighty GOD upon his majesty's fleets and armies in the present important situation of publick affairs; as also the humbling of ourselves before Him in a deep sense of His late visitation, by a most dreadful and extensive earthquake, more particularly felt in some neighbouring countries, in alliance and friendship with us, and in some degree by ourselves; and in order to the obtaining the pardon of our crying sins, to the averting of His judgments, and for the continuance of His mercy, in the support of the Protestant religion and our Liberties, in the prosperity of our country, and in the welfare of the King and the royal family.

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# MEMORIAL

CONCERNING

PERSONAL and FAMILY-FASTING  
and HUMILIATION, presented to  
SAINTS and SINNERS:

Wherein also the Nature of PERSONAL COVENANTING  
with GOD, is occasionally opened.

*By the late Reverend and Learned Mr. THOMAS  
BOSTON, Minister of the Gospel at Ettrick.*

To which is prefixed,

## A P R E F A C E,

*By the Revd. Mr. THOMAS BOSTON, Minister at Oxnam.*

Printed in the Year MDCCCLVI.

MEMORIAL

OF

PERSONAL and FAMILY-FASTING  
and HUMILIATION, prescribed to  
SAINTS and SINNERS:

Wherein also the PERSONAL GOVERNMENT  
with Obedience is opened.



By the late Thomas Boston, Minister of the Gospel at Fifehead.  
BOSTON, Minister of the Gospel at Fifehead.

To which is prefixed,

A PREFACE.

By the Author, Mr. Thomas Boston, Minister of the Gospel at Fifehead.

Printed in the Year MDCCLXXI.

A  
P R E F A C E  
B Y T H E

Reverend Mr THOMAS BOSTON,  
*Minister of the Gospel at OXNAM.*

**T**HE following Memorial was prepared for publication by the worthy author, my father, not long before his death. And since that time, it has undergone several impressions, being always printed together with *The View of the Covenant of Grace*. The re-printing it at this time was thought seasonable by many, as the judgments of God are going abroad in the earth, and we are called to national fasting and humiliation. 'Tis true, this Memorial is anent personal and family-fasting; but certainly, publick national fasting will never turn out to any good account, unless families and individuals humble themselves before the Lord, as directed in this little Treatise.

The dispensations of Providence begin to be very awful and alarming:—The Lord seems to be risen out of his place, to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquities.—One of the most flourishing cities in Europe has been lately

destroyed by an earthquake, and many thousands of the inhabitants buried in its ruins. Yea, there have been earthquakes in divers places. Sudden deaths also are frequent in many corners of the land.—And the nations are threatned with the terrible calamities of war.—All which loudly proclaim that God has a controversy with us : and it becomes the inhabitants of Great Britain and Ireland to tremble for themselves, and for their children.

That wickedness of all sorts prevails to an uncommon degree in our island, especially in the capital cities thereof, will be acknowledged by all sober persons : and this, in the common and ordinary course of Providence, must issue in God's avenging himself upon us by terrible judgments. There's no need of a prophetick spirit to know that judgments are approaching, nor must the apprehensions which some have of their being near, come under the censure of enthusiastick, delirious and melancholy fancies. For as one may be sure, that natural causes will produce their effects, unless there be an immediate interposition to hinder it ; so, moral causes will produce their effects, i. e. a deluge of wickedness will bring on a deluge of wrath, if God keeps to the ordinary method of Providence in managing the world. I doubt not but wickedness may prevail as much in other nations as it does with us ; however, if 'tis considered what privileges we enjoy, by the clear light of the gospel, beyond most other



nations, our guilt will appear highly aggravated above theirs. Our Lord tells the Capernaïtes, who were exalted to heaven, in point of external privileges, that they should be brought down to hell, and that it should be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for them, Mat. xi. 23, 24. And if we trace the wickedness of these lands to the fountain of it, I apprehend, it will turn out to be our unbelief of the gospel;—The gospel, I say, where we have the plan laid down in infinite wisdom, for restoring fallen man to the favour of God, and working him up into an assimilation to God, which is the highest honour and happiness that human nature is capable of. Now when this plan is rejected both in theory and practice; or, when the theory of it is retained, but the practical application thereof entirely neglected; what can be expected in the natural course of things, but that mankind must degenerate more and more, and multiply their provocations, until incensed justice arise, and avenge upon them the quarrel of abused patience?

The atheism and infidelity of the age are come to an enormous height. We have been for years past, and still continue to be, plagued and pestered with books razing the foundations of natural, as well as revealed religion. And tho' the authors of them have seen their blasphemies, their sophistry, and nonsense exposed again and again, by men of the most exquisite sense and know-

ledge, yet they still persist in retailing the same silly stuff, and like madmen, constantly rhyme over the same thing, without attending to what's spoken by the sober and wise. This sort of gentlemen seem to take it for granted, that Christianity is fairly proven to be an imposture; and so they set it up as the principal subject of mirth and ridicule, by way of revenge upon it, for having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world. 'Tis now become fashionable, in many companies, to break a jest upon the Bible, and burlesque the mysteries of our holy religion.—The greatest block-heads in nature will roar out priest-craft, imposture, hypocisy, &c. and the veriest asses will pretend to reprove the madness of the Prophets.

On the other hand, the bulk of those who retain the theory of Christianity, who hold what they call the orthodox faith, are nevertheless utter strangers to the life, and power, and practice of godliness: nay, their lives are a staring contradiction to their profession.—And, what's much to be lamented, as an evident token of the Lord's anger gone out against this generation, is, that the contentions, divisions, and animosities about religion were never perhaps to a greater height than now. People heartily hate one another, in pursuit of a religion which breathes nothing but brotherly love, kindness and charity; and are ready solemnly to deliver one another over to the devil, for his sake who

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came to deliver us from sin and satan. Be astonished at this, O ye heavens! Tell it not in Gath, &c. Is it any wonder that men, modelled after the temper of the meek and lowly Jesus, are at times ready to turn sick of such a world, and desire to leave this field of contention and strife, and retire to those happy regions where peace, and love, and joy shew their triumphant power unto eternity?

When desolating judgments are felt, or feared, we should beware of despising them, on the one hand, and of desponding under them, on the other. Some are so atheistical as to scoff at the most terrible judgments of God, while others would take off any serious impression they see them make on people, by pretending to account for them naturally, or upon philosophical principles. But our God is the God of nature, he's the first cause, 'tis his hand that sets and keeps all the wheels of nature in motion. Therefore, when we see terrible calamities, such as earthquakes, trysting with the enormous crimes of a degerate age, we have reason to consider them as evidences of the divine displeasure.

On the other hand, we should beware of sinking under the terror of divine judgments, so as to lose our confidence in God, and to turn spiritless in duties of religion. For the Lord taketh pleasure in those whose fear of him is joined with a kindly hoping in his mercy, Psalm cxlvii. 1. And he has promised to keep him in per-



fect peace whose mind is staid on him, because he trusted in him, *Isa. xxvi. 3.*

*The right improvements of the judgments of God, now going abroad in the earth, seems to lie chiefly in two things. First, We should improve them in the way of repentance and reformation. This God expects and requires of us. When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness, Isa. xxvi. 9. The Lord's voice cryeth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name: hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it, Mic. vi. 9. When some told our Saviour of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices, and of the eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, he cautions them against thinking that these sufferers were greater sinners than others. I tell you nay, says Christ. What then is the language of such Providences? 'Tis plainly this. Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish, Luke xiii. 2, 3, 4, 5. And if we'd have hearts truly broken and contrite for our sins, which are the procuring cause of all our calamities, we must fly to him whom God hath exalted with his right hand, to be a prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. Secondly, We should improve them in the way of sitting loose to all earthly enjoyments, and making ready for our removal into that eternal world, which receives all, while it*



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returns none. Let us not be seeking great things for ourselves, when God, by his judgments, is breaking down, and plucking up. Let us learn to have the comforts of this life, as if we had them not, and to possess them so, as they may not take possession of us: and then, if God calls for them, they will not be torn out of our hands. Let us make ready for death, and for the grave, and for the awful eternity beyond both. Let us endeavour to get matters 'twixt God and us brought to a clear and comfortable issue, thro' the Mediator: and then, in whatsoever shape death approach us, it shall not harm us, and we will have nothing to do when we die, but to resign the saved soul into the hands of the only Saviour.

But the reader shall no longer be detained from perusing the following Memorial: and I heartily pray, that the divine Blessing may accompany it.

*Thomas Boston.*

Oxnam Mansf.,  
January 17.  
1756.

THE FIRST PART

OF THE HISTORY OF THE  
LIFE OF THE LATE  
JOHN DEE

BY  
JOHN DEE

IN TWO VOLUMES

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By the Author

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## CONCERNING

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Zech. xii. 12. *And the land shall mourn, every family apart.*

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## CHAP. I.

Of PERSONAL and FAMILY-FASTING and HU-  
MILIATION in the general.

**R**ELIGIOUS Fasts, kept in secret, by a parti-  
cular person, apart by himself, and by a particu-  
lar family apart by themselves, concerning which  
this *Memorial* is presented both to saints and sinners, are  
not indeed the stated and ordinary duties of all times, to  
be performed daily, or at set times recurring; such as pray-  
er, praise, and reading of the word are: but they are ex-  
traordinary duties of some times; and to be performed  
occasionally, as depending intirely, in respect of the exer-  
cise of them, on the call of Providence, which is variable.

They are authoris'd, and enjoined us, in the word of

God : and therefore, when we shall have performed them, we must say, *We are unprofitable servants*, we have done that which was our DUTY to do ; and must abhor the least thought of meriting thereby.

The particular seasons of them are determined by Providence. Wherefore, they who would be practisers of them, must be religious observers of Providence : otherwise God may be calling aloud, for *weeping and mourning, and girding with sackcloth*, while they are not heeding it, are indulging themselves in joy and gladness, *Isa. xxii. 12, 13.* a dangerous adventure ! Ver. 14. *Surely this iniquity shall not be purged from you, till ye die, saith the Lord.*

Hence the most serious and tender among knowing Christians, will readily be found the most frequent in these exercises. It is on the *pouring out of the Spirit*, that the land is to mourn, every family apart, and their wives, apart, *Zech. xii. 10, 12.* Paul was a scene, wherein corrupt nature shewed her cursed vigour, he being, when he was bad, very bad ; and grace, in its turn, its sacred power, he being, when he was good, very good, and then *in fastings often*, *2 Cor. xi. 27.*

These duties consist of an external and circumstantial part, and an internal and substantial part.

To the external and circumstantial part of them belong time, place, and abstinence.

First of all, a proper time must be set apart for these duties. And this is to be regulated by Christian prudence, as best suits the circumstances of the person or family.

We find the saints in Scripture, ordinarily kept their fasts by DAY. But we have an instance of a personal fast kept by NIGHT, *2 Sam. xii. 16.* *David fasted, and went in, and lay all night upon the earth.* This I do the rather notice, to obviate the excuse of these who quite neglect this duty, under the pretence of their not being masters of their own time. If the heart can be brought to it, one will readily find some time or other for it, either by day, or else by night. It is recorded to the honour of one of the weaker sex, namely, *Anna*, that she *served God with fastings and prayers night and day*, *Luke ii. 36, 37.*

As to the QUANTITY of time, to be spent in personal or



family-fasting and humiliation; the duty, I judge, is to regulate it; and not it to regulate the duty. The family-fast of *Esther* with her maidens, observed also by all the Jews in *Shushan*, lasted three days, *Esth.* iv. 16. We read of the *fasting day*, *Jer.* xxxvi. 6. Sometimes 'twould seem it was but a part of a day, that was spent in such exercise; as in *Cornelius* his personal fast, which seems to have been over before the ninth hour, that is, before three o'clock in the afternoon, *Acts* x. 30. *Four days ago I was fasting until this hour, and at the ninth hour I prayed in my house*, before which time of the fourth day, *Peter*, to whom *Cornelius* saith this, might be come; there being but 36 miles from *Joppa* to *Cesarea*, whither he came on the second day after he set out from *Joppa*, *Ver.* 23, 24. Compare *Ver.* 8, 9, 17. Much about that time of the day, *Daniel* got the answer of his prayers, made in his personal fast, namely, *about the time of the evening oblation*, or the ninth hour, *Dan.* ix. 21. And the people being assembled with fasting, *Neh.* ix. 1. *they read in the book of the law, one fourth part of the day, and another fourth part they confessed and worshipped*, *Ver.* 3. So they continued in the work six hours; from nine o'clock in the morning, as it would seem, till three afternoon: that is, from the time of the morning sacrifice, to the evening sacrifice, with which the work seems to have been closed, as, it may be presumed, they spent the morning in private preparation for the public duty.

Wherefore I judge, that none are to be solicitous, as to what quantity of time, more or less, they spend in these exercises, so that the work of the time be done. Nay, I very much doubt, men lay a snare for themselves, in tying themselves to a certain quantity of time in such cases. It is sufficient to resolve, that, according to our ability, we will take as much time, as the work shall be found to require.

*Secondly*, A proper place is also to be chosen, where the person or family may perform the duty without disturbance from others. Time and place are natural circumstances of the action: and all places are alike now, under the gospel; none more holy than another. Men may pray every where, whether in the house, or in the

field, *lifting up holy hands*, 1 Tim. ii. 8. Only, forasmuch as family-fasting is a private duty, it requires a private place; and personal fasting a secret duty, it requires a secret place; according to the caution given us by our Saviour, Mat. vi. 18. *That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy father which is in heaven.*

Thirdly, *Abstinence* is included in the nature of the thing; abstinence from meat and drink, and all bodily pleasures whatsoever, as well as ceasing from worldly business. The Jews are taxed, for finding pleasure and exacting their labours on the day of their fast, Isa. lviii. 3. A time of religious fasting is a time for one's *afflicting his soul*, Ver. 5. by denying himself even these lawful comforts and delights, which he may freely use at other times. Exodus xxxiii. 4. *The people ——— mourned, and no man did put on him his ornaments.* Dan. ix. 3. *I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.* 1 Cor. vii. 5. *Defraud you not one another, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer.*

The rule for abstinence from meat and drink, cannot be the same as to all: for fasting not being a part of worship, but a means to dispose and fit us for extraordinary worshipping, is to be used only as helping thereto: but 'tis certain, that what measure of it would be helpful to some for that end, would be a great hinderance to others. Wherefore, weakly persons, whom total abstinence would disfit and indispose for duty, are not called to fast at that rate: in their case, that saying takes place, Hos. vi. 6. *I desired mercy, and not sacrifice.* Yet ought they not in that case, to indulge themselves the use of meat and drink, with the same freedom as at other times; but to use a partial abstinence, altering the quantity or quality of them, or both, so as they may thereby be afflicted, as the Scripture expresseth it, Lev. xxiii. 29. So Daniel in his mourning, Dan. x. 3. *eat no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine into his mouth.*

Mean while, all these things are but the outward shell of these duties: the internal and substantial part of them, lies in the following spiritual exercises.

First, Serious meditation and consideration of our ways,

*Hag. i. 5.* Such times are to be set apart from conversing with the world, that we may the more solemnly commune with our own hearts, as to the state of matters between God and us. In them we are diligently to review our past life, *search and try our ways, Lam. iii. 40.* And we are to search out our sins, by a sorrowful calling to remembrance the sins of our heart and life; and that, as particularly as we can: and to search into them, by a deep consideration of the evil of them, and of their aggravations, the light, love, mercies, and warnings we have sinned against; tracing them up to the sin of our nature, the impoisoned fountain, from whence they have all proceeded. And the more fully and freely we converse with ourselves upon them, we'll be the more fit to speak unto God anent them, in confession and pleading for pardon.

*Secondly,* Deep humiliation of soul before the Lord; the which was signified by the sackcloth and ashes used, under the law, on such occasions. The consideration of our ways is to be pursued, till our soul be humbled within us; our heart rent, not with remorse for sin only, but with regret and kindly sorrow for it, as an offence to *a gracious and merciful God, Joel ii. 12, 13.* our face filled with shame and blushing before him; in the view of our spiritual nakedness, pollution, and defilement, *Ezra ix. 6.* and we loath ourselves, as most vile in our own eyes, *Ezek. xxxvi. 31. Job xl. 4.*

*Thirdly,* Free and open confession of sin before God, without reserve. This is a very material part of the duty incumbent on us in religious fasting: and the due consideration and deep humiliation just now mentioned, do naturally issue in it; producing, of course, extraordinary confession of sin, an exercise most suitable on such an occasion. Hence the *Jews* spent one fourth part of the day in confessing and worshipping, *Neh. ix. 3.* and the angel, who brought the answer to *Daniel's* supplications, *about the time of the evening oblation,* found him still *praying and confessing his sin, Dan. ix. 20, 21.* For here, the sinner duly humbled has much ado, acting against himself the part of an accuser, recounting before the Lord his transgressions of the holy law, so far as he is able to reach them; the part of an advocate, opening up the particu-



lars, in their nature, and aggravating circumstances; and the part of a judge, justifying God in all the evil he has brought upon him, and condemning himself as unworthy of the least of all his mercies, and deserving to perish under eternal wrath,

*Fourthly*, The exercise of repentance, in turning from sin unto God, both in heart and life; the native result of deep humiliation and sincere confession, *Joel ii. 12. Turn ye even to me — with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.* In vain will we fast, and pretend to be humbled for our sins, and make confession of them, if our love of sin be not turned into hatred; our liking of it, into loathing; and our cleaving to it, into a longing to be rid of it; with full purpose to resist the motions of it in our heart, and the outbreakings thereof in our life: and, if we turn not unto God, as our rightful Lord and Master, and return to our duty again. If we are indeed true penitents, we'll turn from sin, not only because 'tis dangerous and destructive to us; but because 'tis offensive to God, dishonours his Son, grieves his Spirit, transgresseth his law, and defaceth his image: and we'll cast away all our transgressions, not only as one would cast away a live-coal out of his bosom, for that it burns him; but as one would cast away a loathsome and filthy thing, for that it defiles him.

But withal, it is to be remembered, that the true way to deal with a hard heart, to bring it to this temper, is to believe the gospel. As ravenous fowls first fly upward, and then come down on their prey; so must we first soar aloft in believing, and then we shall come down, in deep humiliation, sincere and free confession, and true repentance, *Zech. xii. 10. They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn.* Therefore the Scripture proposeth the object of faith, in the promise of grace, as a motive to repentance, that by a believing application thereof, the hard heart may be moved and turned, *Joel ii. 13. Turn unto the Lord your God, for he is gracious.* One may otherwise toil long with it: but all in vain. *Without faith it is impossible to please God, Heb. xi. 6.* and therefore, impossible to reach true humiliation, right confession, and sincere repentance, which are very pleasing to him, *Jer.*

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xxx. 18, 19, 20. The unbelieving sinner may be brought to roar under law horror; but one will never be a kindly mourner, but under gospel influences. When guilt stares one in the face, unbelief locks up the heart, as a keen frost doth the waters; but faith in the Redeemer's blood, melts it, to flow in tears of godly sorrow. Hard thoughts of God, which unbelief suggests to a soul stung with guilt, alienate that soul more and more from him; they render it like the worm, which, when one offers to tread upon it, presently contracts itself, and puts itself in the best posture of defence that it can: but the believing of the proclaimed pardon, touches the heart of the rebel so, that he casts down himself at the feet of his sovereign, willingly yielding himself to return to his duty.

*Fifthly*, Solemn covenanting with God, entering into, or renewing, covenant with him in express words. As a fast-day is a day to loose the bands of wickedness, so it is a day for coming explicitly into the bond of the holy covenant, *Jer. l. 4. Going and weeping, they shall go and seek the Lord their God. Ver. 5. — Saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord, in a perpetual covenant, that shall not be forgotten.* Accordingly, this was an eminent part of their fast-day's work, *Neh. ix. 38.* It follows of course, on due humiliation, confession, and the exercise of repentance, whereby the league with sin is broken. And it lies in a solemn professing before the Lord, that we take hold of his covenant, believing on the name of his Son, as the Saviour of the world, and our Saviour, and that in and through him, he will be our God, and we shall be his people; and, that we are from the heart content, and consent to take him for our Portion, Lord, and Master, and resign ourselves to him only, wholly, and for ever. *Heb. viii. 10. This is the covenant — I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. Isa. xlix. 8. I will give thee for a covenant. Chap. lvi. 6. Every one that taketh hold of my covenant. John i. 12. As many as received him — that believe in his name. Psalm xvi. 2. O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord. Isa. xliv. 5. One shall say, I am the Lord's.*

*Lastly*, Extraordinary prayer, in importunate addresses and petitions unto our covenanted God, for that which

is the particular occasion of our fast. The confession and the covenanting are, both of them, to be done prayer-ways, as appears from *Dan.* ix. 4, --- 15. *Neh.* ix. 6, --- 38. But besides, there must be prayers, supplications, and petitions, made for what the person or family hath particularly in view, in their fast. *Psaln xxxv.* 13. *When they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting, and my prayer returned unto mine own bosom.* And indeed, the great end and design for which such fasts are to be kept, is, That thereby the parties may be the more stirred up unto, and fitted for, wrestling with God in prayer, anent the case which they have particularly at heart. So the *Ninevites* having their threatned overthrow at heart, it was ordered, that *man and beast* should be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God, *Jonah* iii. 8. That is, that the men should cry, in prayer, for pity and sparing: and to the end they might be moved to the greater fervency in these their praying cries, it is provided, that they and their beasts too should be covered with sackcloth; and, that their beasts, having fodder and water withheld from them on that occasion, should be made to cry for hunger and thirst, even to cry unto God, namely, interpretatively, as the *young ravens* cry unto him, *Job xxxviii.* 41. At which rate, the cries of the beasts, being mixed with the cries of men, would make the solemnity of that extraordinary mourning very great: and the hearts of men, being, every now and then during that solemnity, pierced with the cries of the harmless brutes, would be stirred up to a more earnest, fervent, and importunate pleading with God for mercy.

Thus far of personal and family-fasting and humiliation in the general.

## CH A P. II.

### *Of PERSONAL Fasting and Humiliation, in particular*

FROM what is said, it appears, That a PERSONAL Fast is a religious exercise, wherein a particular person, having set apart some time from his ordinary business

in the world, spends it in some secret place by himself, in acts of devotion tending to his humiliation and reformation, and particularly in prayer, with fasting. Concerning the which, we shall consider, (1.) The divine warrant for it. (2.) The call to it. (3.) Offer advice how to manage it.

## S E C T. I.

*Of the Divine WARRANT for Personal Fasting and Humiliation.*

**F**Orasmuch as will-worship is condemned by the word, and that can never be obedience to God, whereof his revealed will is not the reason and rule; it concerneth all who would perform this duty in faith, so as to have it accepted of him, to know who hath required it at their hands. And to set that matter in a light, sufficient to satisfy and bind it upon the conscience, as a duty owing unto God, let these few things following be duly weighed.

*First*, God requires it in his word; and that both directly and indirectly.

It is directly required, *James iv. 9. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep.* It is plain enough from the context, these things are proposed as agreeing to particular persons in their personal capacity. See Ver. 8, 10. And what it is that's required of them in these words, could not miss to be as plain to those unto whom they were originally directed; to wit, That 'tis fasting and humiliation that was intended by them. For this epistle was written to those who were *Jews*, by nation, *The twelve tribes scattered abroad*, Chap. i. 1. And this is the very language of the Old Testament in that case, the same manner of expression in which their Prophets called them to it, *Lev. xxiii. 27. On the tenth day of this seventh month, there shall be a day of atonement, and ye shall afflict your souls; to wit, with fasting, Isa. lviii. 5. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? A day for a man to afflict his soul? Or, more agreeable to the original, Shall a fast I will choose, a day of mens. afflicting their souls, be like this? Joel ii. 12. Turn ye even to me----with fasting, and with weeping, and*



with mourning. And the mourning required in these texts, differs from the weeping, as the habit and gestures of mourners differ from their tears, *Gen. xxxvii. 34. Eccles. iii. 4.* directly pointing unto the duty of fasting and humiliation.

It is also required indirectly in the word, which supposeth it to be a duty the Saints will practise; inasmuch as divine directions are given anent it. Now, it is inconsistent with the holiness of God, to give directions for regulating of will-worship, which he doth simply condemn, *Mat. xv. 9. Col. ii. 23. Jer. vii. 31.* But our Saviour gives direction about personal fasting, *Mat. vi. 16. When ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance; for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. Ver. 17. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face: Ver. 18. That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.* And 'tis evident, that these directions do concern secret and personal fasting: for besides that the text speaks expressly of that which is done in secret; and therefore it is to be kept secret: contrary to the practice of the hypocritical Pharisees, who made it their business to propale their secret devotions. The outward signs of fasting are commended in the case of publick fasts, *Exod. xxxiii. 4. Jon. iii. 8. Joel ii. 15, 16, 17.* In like manner the Apostle Paul gives a direction about this duty, *1 Cor. vii. 5. Defraud you not one another, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer:* where the consent mentioned as necessary, determines the fasting to be personal; forasmuch as, in the case of publick fasts, that matter is predetermined by a superior authority; and in the case of family fasts, it follows of course, on the appointment of such a fast.

Secondly, 'Tis promised that the Saints shall perform this duty, *Zech. xii. 10. I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications. Ver. 12. And the land shall mourn, every family apart --- and their wives apart.* Thus, in virtue of the grace of the covenant, this duty is made the



matter of a promise; even as other duties of holy obedience are. Accordingly our Lord promis'd it, in the case of his disciples in particular; *Mat. ix. 15. The days will come when the Bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast*: to wit, personally: for it was not the neglect of the publick fast appointed and stated in the law, *Lev. xxiii. 27, --- 32.* that they were taxed for; but the neglect of personal fasting, used by the disciples of *John*, upon the occasion of their master, *The friend of the Bridegroom*, his being taken from them; and also by the *Pharisees*, out of their superstitious and vain-glorious disposition; *Mat. ix. 14.* with *Luke xviii. 12.*

*Thirdly*, It is recommended unto us by the practise of the Saints mentioned in Scripture. It was, as we have already seen, practis'd by *David*, a man according to God's own heart, *2 Sam. xii. 16. Psu. xxxv. 13.* by *Daniel*, a man greatly beloved, *Dan. ix. 3.* and *x. 2, 3.* and by the devout Centurion, *Acts x. 30.* It was a frequent exercise of *Paul*, the laborious Apostle of the *Gentiles*, *2 Cor. xi. 27.* These all had the seal of God's good pleasure with their work, set upon it, in the communion with God, allow'd them therein. And 'tis our duty to go forth by the footsteps of the flock, following their approved example.

*Lastly*, That occasional religious fasting and humiliation is a duty required in the word of God, and to be performed by societies in a publick capacity, will not, I presume, be questioned. Now, upon that ground, the duty of personal fasting and humiliation, may be thus evinced.

1. There is nothing in the nature of religious fasting and humiliation, that of itself is publick, or necessarily requiring a plurality of persons to join therein. The preaching of the word, and celebration of the sacraments, do, in their own nature, require society; and therefore are not to be used by a single person alone in his closet. But it is not so in this case. One may keep a fast alone, as well as he may pray, read the Scriptures, and sing Psalms, alone. Now whatever ordinances God hath appointed, and hath not tied to societies or assemblies, nor to any certain set of men, they are the duty of every one in particular, who is capable to perform them.

2. The ground, upon which the duty of fasting and humiliation is bound on societies, is a publick capacity, takes place in the case of particular persons, namely, That extraordinary duties are called for on extraordinary emergents and occasions. If then a church or congregation is called to fasting and humiliation, on such occasions in their case; is not a particular person called to the same, on such occasions in his case? If abounding sin, or judgments threatned or inflicted on a land, require solemn publick fasting and humiliation; do not the same things in the case of a particular person call for personal fasting and humiliation? Surely, every one ought to keep his own vineyard, with the same diligence the publick vineyard is to be kept: if one does not so, it will be bitterness in the end, *Cant. i. 6.*

3. Extraordinary duties to be performed by a whole nation, church, or congregation, cannot be soon overtaken; because all great bodies are slow in their motions; and sometimes the season may be over, ere they can move thereto in a publick capacity: yea, and oft-times God is calling aloud, by his Providence, for national and congregational fasting and humiliation, when the call is not heeded by them, on whom it is incumbent to appoint them. Now, what should particular persons, discerning the call of Providence, do in such cases? Must they sit still, and not answer the call as they may, because they cannot answer it as they would? Should they not rather keep personal and family fasts, for these causes, for which others either cannot or will not keep publick fasts; as in the case of God's pleading with the land of *Egypt*, *He that feared the word of the Lord, amongst the servants of Pharaoh, made his servants and his cattle flee into the houses, Exod. ix. 20.* When the *Jews* are dispersed, some of them in one country, some in another, how shall the land mourn? Must they wait until they be gathered together? No: but the land shall mourn, families apart, and particular persons apart: even as when our neighbour's house is on fire, we do not tarry, until the whole town or neighbourhood be gathered; but immediately fall to work, ourselves, to do what lies in our power for quenching the flames.

And thus much shall suffice, to have spoken of the *divine warrant* for this extraordinary duty.

## S E C T. II.

*Of a Providential CALL to personal Fasting and Humiliation.*

THE case of a church, the case of a neighbour, and one's own private case, may, each of them separately, and much more all of them conjunctly, found a providential *call* to *personal fasting* and *humiliation*. The Prophet *Daniel* kept a personal fast on the church's account, *Dan.* ix. 2, 3. *David* on his neighbour's account, *Psal.* xxxv. 13. and on his own, 2 *Sam.* xii. 16,

*Zion's* children should reckon her interest theirs: and as secret personal fasting for publick causes, argues a truly publick spirit; so 'tis highly commendable, and, being rightly managed, is very acceptable in the sight of God, *Dan.* ix. 20, 21.

The *communion of saints*, is an article of our creed, and a most beneficial thing in the practice thereof. Considered only in these two parts of it, namely, a communion of *burdens*, *Gal.* vi. 2. and a communion of *prayers*, *James* v. 16. 'tis one of the best cordials the travellers towards *Zion* have by the way. For one to *love his neighbour as himself*, whereof secret fasting on his account is a good exidence, *is more than all burnt-offerings and sacrifices*, *Mark* xii. 33. And whether it do good to his neighbour or not. it will not fail, if rightly managed, to return with a plentiful reward into his own bosom, according to the *Psalmist's* experience, *Psal.* xxxv. 14.

Howbeit, 'tis hardly to be expected, that one will be brought to the practice of this duty on the account of others, till once he has been engaged therein upon his own account. But surely, if professors of religion were more exercised about their own spiritual case, this duty of personal fasting and humiliation would not be so rare as it is. *Paul*, who had much of this kind of exercise, *Acts* xxiv. 16. was in *fasting often*, 2 *Cor.* xi. 27. *kept under his body*, and brought it into subjection, 1 *Cor.* ix. 27.

Now any or all of these cases call for this extraordinary duty, in three kind of events, other circumstances agree-



ing, and pointing thereto in the conduct of Providence.

Either, 1. When there is any special evil actually lying upon us, the church, or our neighbour in whom we have a special concern; whither it be a sinful or a penal evil. There are some sins, that leave such guilt on the conscience, and such a defilement on the heart and life, as call aloud for fasting and humiliation, in order to a recovery from the dismal effects thereof, *James iv. 8. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners, purify your hearts, ye doubleminded. Ver. 9. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep.* Accordingly the *Israelites* gathered to *Mizpeh*, being sensible of the abominable idolatries they had fallen into, *fasted that day, and said, we have sinned against the Lord, 1 Sam. vii. 6.*

In like manner, when the tokens of God's high displeasure are gone out in afflicting providences, 'tis time for us to roll ourselves in the dust; and so, to accommodate our spirit and way to the dispensation, humbling ourselves before him with fasting. Thus *Nehemiah* found himself called to fasting, upon information received of the continued ruins of *Jerusalem*, and the affliction that the returned captives were in. *Neh. i. 3, 4. David*, and those with him, upon the news of the defeat of *Israel*, and the death of *Saul* and *Jonathan*, *2 Sam. i. 12.* and the people, upon the consideration of the slaughter which the *Benjamites* had made among them, *Judges xx. 26.*

Or 2. When there is any special stroke threatned and impending. Thus the inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, being in imminent danger from their enemies, were providentially called to weeping and mourning, tho' they heeded it not, *Isa. xii. 13.* But the *Ninevites* took such an alarm, and complied with the call of Providence, *Jon. iii. 4--9.* So did *David*, when God struck his child with sickness, *2 Sam. xii. 15, 16.* Yea, and so did even *Ahab*, when he had heard *Elijah's* heavy message against him and his house, *1 Kings xxi. 27.* When the lion roars, it becomes us to fear: when God's hand is lifted up, and he appears to be about to strike, 'tis high time for us to strip ourselves of our ornaments, and to ly in sackcloth and ashes.

Or else, 3. When there is some special mercy and favour to be desired of the Lord; as was the return of the *Babylonish* captivity, for which *Daniel* kept his fast, *Dan. ix.*



1, 2, 3. Christians exercised unto godliness, will rarely, if ever, want their particular suits, and special errands unto the throne of grace. The same God, who make some mercies fall into the lap of others, without their being at much pains about them, will give his own children many an errand unto himself for them, ere they obtain them: because they must have them in the way of the covenant; whereas they come to others, only in the way of common Providence, in which a blasting curse may come along with the mercy.

To set this matter in yet a clearer light, we shall exemplify these general heads, in one's private case; and that, in several instances, to be accommodate to the case of the church, and of our neighbour; by these who are disposed religiously to observe and consider the dispensations of Providence. There is a variety of these particular cases, which, with agreeing circumstances to be discerned by each one for himself, call for personal fasting and humiliation.

As, 1. *When through a long tract of sinning and care-*

*less walking, the case of one's soul is left quite in disorder and confusion, Isa. xxxii. 11. Tremble ye women that are at ease: be troubled ye careless ones: strip ye and make ye bare, and gird sackcloth upon your loins. Certainly the voice of God unto such is, Thus saith the Lord, consider your ways, Hag. i. 5. Want of consideration ruins many. They deal with their souls, as some foolish men do with their estates, running on without consideration, till they have run themselves a-ground. But these who adventure so to take a time for sinning, have need to take also a set time for mourning: for 'tis not to be expected, that accounts which have been long running on, can be cleared and adjusted with a glance of one's eye. O careless sinner, consider how matters stand betwixt God and you: are you in any tolerable case for the other world, for death and eternity? Are not matters gone quite to wreck, with your soul? Are you not pining away in your iniquity? Is not the state and condition of your souls, like that of the sluggard's vineyard, that was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone-wall thereof was broken down? Prov. xxiv. 31. O set*

about personal fasting and humiliation. Ordinary pains will not serve to recover the long neglected garden : it must be trenched, and digged deep. A little may help the case, that's timely seen to : but all this will be little enough for thine, which hath lain so long neglected.

*Secondly*, When one is, under convictions, entertaining some thoughts to reform. On such an occasion was that fast kept, *Neh. ix. 1, 2.* and had very good effects, *Ver. 38. chap. x. 1, 28, 29.* This method is, in such a case, a proper means to bring men to a point in the matter, and to fix their resolutions, otherwise ready to prove abortive. Some have convictions, which, at times, coming and passing away, like a stitch in one's side, set them now and then to their prayers; but never prevail to bring them to a settled course of reformation of life : their disease is too inveterate, to be so easily carried off. But were they so wise, as to make these convictions a matter of solemn seriousness, setting some time apart on that occasion for personal fasting and humiliation, they might, through the divine Blessing, turn to a good account, for the interest of their souls.

*Thirdly*, When the conscience is defiled with the guilt of some atrocious sin. Doth national guilt of that kind, require national fasting? And doth not personal guilt of the same kind, require personal fasting? yea, sure, God calls men, in that case, to be *afflicted; and mourn; and weep, James iv. 8, 9.* Strong diseases require strong remedies; and conscience-wasting guilt, deep humiliation, as in *David's* case, *Psal. li.* and *Peter's*, *Matth. xxvi. 75.* This kind of guilt, deeply wounding and stinging the soul, defiling and wasting the conscience, may be without any scandalous enormities of life, appearing to the view of the world. God is witness to secret sins, even to the sins of the heart : and men of tender consciences will be sick at the heart, with such sins as are hid from all the world, and will never move others.

*Fourthly*, When one would fain get over a snare, he is often caught in, and have victory over a lust, that hath often mastered him. There are not a few, who have many good things about them, yet *lack one thing*: and that *one thing* is like to part between heaven and them; marring all

their good things both by way of evidence, and of efficacy, *Mark x. 21.* They know, that 'tis wrong; they often resolve to amend; and they would fain get above it: but whenever a new temptation comes, Satan attacking them on the weak side, down go all their resolutions, like a bowing high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant; and they are hard and fast in the snare again. O consider, that this *kind goeth not out, but by Prayer, Matth. xvii. 21.* Set therefore some time apart for personal fasting and humiliation, on the account of that very thing, that you may wrestle with God in prayer, anent it: and use this method time after time, until you prevail against it. Else that *one thing* may ruin you: and you will be condemned for it, not because you could not help it, but because you would not use the means appointed of God for relief in that case.

*Fifthly.* When one is under a dead desertion; in which case the Lord is departed, the wonted influences from heaven are with-held; but, the wound not smarting, by reason of spiritual deadness, the party is not much moved therewith. This was the case of the *spouse, Cant. iii. 1. By night on my bed, I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not.* And for a recovery from it, she made some extraordinary efforts in the way of duty, *Ver. 2. 3, 4.* The same appears to be the case of many, with whom some time a day it was *better than now.* God hides his face from them: there incomes from heaven are rare and scanty, in comparison of what they have formerly been: they are sighing, and going backward. Though they go the round of ordinary religious exercises still: yet 'tis long since they had a token from the Beloved, access too, or communion with God in them. O fast and pray for a recovery, as did *Isreal* when, after they had been long deserted, and very little affected with it, they began at length to *lament after the Lord, 1 Sam. vii. 2, 6.* It requires much in the way of ordinary means, to go to the ground of such a case, wherein by *much slothfulness the building hath decayed, and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through.* Though true grace can never be totally lost; yet it may be brought to such a very low pass, that, as some scholars, for retrieving



the loss sustained through long absence from the school, must begin a-new again; so some Christians, in order to their recovery, must be carried through the several steps of conversion again, as we may learn from our Saviour's words to *Peter*, with relation to his fall, *Luke* xxii. 32. *I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*

*Sixthly*, When one is under a felt and smarting desertion, *Isa.* xlix. 14. *Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me.* This is a more hopeful case than the former: howbeit it goes to the quick, *Prov.* xviii. 14. *The spirit of man will sustain his infirmity: but a wounded spirit who can bear?* There are many bitter ingredients in it, which make it a sorrowful case, exquisitely painful to the soul, like that of a *women forsaken, and grieved in spirit, even a wife of youth, Isa.* liv. 6. To one thus deserted, wrath appears in the face of God, and imprest on every dispensation, *Psalms* lxxxviii. 7, 8. To his sense and feeling, his prayer is shut out, *Lam.* iii. 8. and flashes of hell come into his soul, *Psalms* lxxxviii. 15, 16. Under the pressure hereof, some very grave and solid persons have not been able to contain themselves, *Job* xxx. 28. *I went mourning without the sun, I stood up, and cried in the congregation.* This smarting desertion, in greater or lesser measure, has often been the fearful outgoing from the dead desertion, as it was in the experience of the spouse, *Cant.* v. 3,---7. And 'tis a loud call to personal fasting and humiliation, *Matth.* ix. 15. *When the Bridegroom shall be taken from them, then shall they fast.*

*Seventhly*, When one is pressed with some outward affliction, whether in his body, relations, name, substance, or otherwise. In such a case, *Job* rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, *Job* i. 20. and *David's knees were weak through fasting, Psalm* cix. 24. A time of affliction is a special season for fasting and prayer. The Lord often lays affliction on his people, on purpose to awaken them to their duty, and as it were to necessitate them to it: even as *Ab-salom*, who, having in vain sent once and again for *Joab*, obliged him at length to come unto him, by causing set his corn-field on fire. This is the way to get affliction sancti-



fied, and in due time removed, *James iv. 10. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.* We ought therefore to take heed, that we be not of those, who cry not when he bindeth them; but that in this case, we do as *Benhadad's* servants, who, upon a signal defeat of his army, put sackcloth on their loins, and ropes on their heads, and went out, as humble supplicants, to the king of Israel, who had smote them, *1 Kings xx. 31.*

*Eighthly,* When, by the aspect of Providence, one is threatened with some such affliction. 'Tis an ungracious hardness, not to be affected when the Lord is lifting up his hand against us. He was a man of an excellent spirit, who said, *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments, Psalm cxix. 120.* Tho' he was an hero that feared the face of no man, he laid aside that bravery of spirit, when he had to do with his God. Wherefore, when the Lord was threatening the removal of a child of his by death, tho' the continuing of that child in life would have been a lasting memorial of his reproach, yet the impression of the Lord's anger on that threatening dispensation, moved him to betake himself to personal fasting and humiliation before the Lord, for the life of that child, *2 Sam. xii. 16, 22.*

*Ninthly,* When one would have light and direction in some particular matter of special weight. 'Tis much to be lamented, that men professing the belief of a divine Providence in human affairs, should, in confidence of their own wisdom, take the weight of their matters on themselves, without acknowledging God in them; aiming only to please themselves therein, and not their God, as if their fancy, conveniency or advantage, and not their conscience, were concerned in their determinations and resolves. Hence it is, that wise men are often left to signal blunders in conduct, and feel marks of God's indignation justly impress'd on their rash determinations. Thus *Joshua* and the princes of *Israel*, in the matter of the league with the *Gibeonites*, finding no need of the exercise of their faith, but of their wit, vainly imagining they could see well enough with their own eyes, *Took of their victuals, and asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord,*

and were egregiously over-reach'd by them, as they saw afterward, when it was too late, *Josh. ix. 14, 22.*

We have a divine command and promise, extending to our temporal, as well as to our spiritual concerns; and very suitable to the necessary dependance we have on God in all things, as creatures on their Creator, *Prov. iii. 5. Lean not unto thine own understanding.* Ver. 6. *In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.* We ought therefore in all our matters, to eye him as our director; and steer our whole course, as he directs by his Word and Providence. Since he hath said, *I will teach thee in the way which thou shalt go, I will guide thee with mine eye, Psalm xxxii. 8.* 'Tis unquestionably our duty, to set the Lord always before us, *Psalm xvi. 8.* to regulate our acting, and ceasing from action, by the divine direction, even as the *Israelites* in the wilderness, removed and rested, just as the pillar of cloud and fire, removed or rested before them, *Numb. ix. 15, ---23.*

Sometimes indeed an affair may be in such a situation, as allows not an opportunity of making an address unto God, for light in it, by solemn prayer: but we are never so circumstanced, but we have access to lift up our eyes to the holy Oracle, in a devout ejaculation; as *Nehemiah* did in such a situation, *Neh. ii. 4, 5.* And there is a promise relative to that case, which has been often verified, in the comfortable experience of the Saints taking that method to obtain the divine direction, *Prov. iv. 12, When thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.* But Christians should accustom themselves, to lay their matters before the Lord, in solemn prayer, for light and direction therein, as far as circumstances do permit. So did *Abraham's* pious servant, with the affair his master had committed to him, *Gen. xxiv. 12, 13, 14.* And accordingly had a pleasurable experience of the accomplishment of the promise relative to that case, *Prov. iv. 12. When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitned.* And where they are to be determined in a matter of special weight, such as the change of their lot, the choice of an employment, some momentous undertaking, or any the like occurrences in life, whereof serious Christians will find not a few allowing them time and opportunity to deliberate on them; that

is a special occasion for extraordinary prayer with fasting, for light from the Lord *the Father of lights*, to discover what is their duty therein, and what he is calling them to in the matter. So the captives returning from *Babylon* with *Ezra*, kept a fast at the river *Ahava*, to seek of God a right way, *Ezra* viii. 21.

*Tenthly*, When duty being cleared in a matter of special weight, it comes to the setting to; in which event one needs the presence of God with him therein, the divine blessing upon it, and success in it. Thus *Esther* being to go in unto the king, to make request for her people, there was solemn fasting, on that occasion, used by her and the Jews in *Shushan*, *Esth.* iv. 8, 16. And *Barnabas* and *Saul* being called of God unto a special work, were not sent away to it, but after fasting and prayer, *Acts* xiii. 2, 3. We need not only light from the Lord to discover unto us our duty in particular cases; but that being obtained, we need also his presence to go along with us in the thing, that we may be enabled rightly to make our way, which he bids us go. Therefore said *Moses*, *Exod.* xxxiii. 15. *If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.* Sin hath defiled every thing to us: and however promising any worldly state, condition, or thing whatsoever, may appear in our eyes; yet if we have not the presence of God in it, and his blessing upon it, to purify it unto us, we'll be myr'd in it, and find a snare and a trap, if not a curse, therein, to us.

*Eleventhly*, When one, having some extraordinary difficulty to encounter, is in hazard of being ensnared either into sin or danger. On such an occasion was the fore-mentioned fast at *Shushan* kept; *Esther* jeoparding her life, in going in unto the king in the inner-court; not called by him, *Esth.* iv. 11, 16. The ship has need to be well balasted, that sails while the wind blows high: and in a difficult and ensnaring time, there's need of fasting and prayer for heaven's safe conduct through it. Mens trusting to themselves in such a case, cannot miss of betraying them into snares.

*Lastly*, When one hath in view some special solemn approach unto God; in which case a special preparation is requisite. Thus *Jacob*, called his family to such prepara-



tion, in the exercise of repentance, in order to their appearing before the Lord at *Bethel*, *Gen.* xxxv. 2, 3. The *Israelites* were called to the same, in order to the awful solemnity of the giving of the law on mount *Sinai*, *Exod.* xix. 10, 11, 15. And 'tis observable, that, whereas the *feast of tabernacles* was the most joyful of all the feasts the *Jews* had throughout the year, a solemn fast was appointed of God to be observed always before it, four free days only interveening, *Lev.* xxiii. 27, 34. For, in the method of grace, none stand so fair for a *lifting up*, as those who are most deeply *humbled*, *Isa.* xl. 4. *Luke* xviii. 14. *James* iv. 10. Wherefore, 'tis a laudable practice of our church, that congregations keep a congregational fast, before the celebration of the feast of the sacrament of the Lord's supper, among them, in order to their preparation for a solemn approach unto God in that holy ordinance. And, for the same reason, secret fasting by particular persons apart, and private fasting by families apart, especially such as have not access to join in the publick fast, would be very seasonable on such an occasion. And if these secret and private fasts could more generally obtain, and get place in congregations, some little time before the communion-work did begin; it would be a token for good, and might prove like the noise and shaking among the dry bones, that ushered in the breathing on the slain, and the causing them to *stand up upon their feet*, *Ezek.* xxxvii. 7, 10.

These things duly considered, each Christian may be in case to judge for himself, when it is, that he is under a *providential Call to personal Fasting and Humiliation*.

### S E C T. III.

#### DIRECTIONS anent personal Fasting and Humiliation.

**H**AVING seen the divine *Warrant for personal Fasting and Humiliation*, and considered the nature of a providential call to that extraordinary duty; it remains to offer some advices or directions for the profitable managing of it in practice.



## DIRECTION I.

When you find that the Lord is calling you to this duty, prudently make choice of a fit time and place for it aforehand, wherein you may have access to go about it without distraction. And carefully dispose of your ordinary affairs, before that time, so as you may have no let nor hinderance from that part, which you can prevent. Works of necessity and mercy, which are lawfully done on the Lord's day, are much more so in this case, wherein the duty waits not on the time, but the time on the duty. Yea, in case something of worldly business, which you could not foresee nor prevent, do fall out in the time of your fast, and cannot be deferred or put off without some notable inconveniency; you may, without scruple, dispatch it: for the time is not holy. But in that case, labour that, if possible, your work be not thereby marr'd; and carefully keep up your frame of spirit for the duty you are engaged in. But Christian prudence to weigh circumstances, for which you are to look up unto the Lord, is necessary to determine herein, according to the general rules of the word, *Mat. xii. 3, — 7.*

As for such as are not masters of their time, which is the case of servants, they cannot lawfully dispose of their time at their own hand, even for this duty: for our God *hates robbery for burnt offerings, Isa. lxi. 8.* But then they may endeavour to procure the necessary time, at the hand of their masters; to whom if they be godly and serious, they may modestly hint their design; pitching on a time with so much discretion, as that their good may not be evil spoken of. And if any be so unmindful of their Master which is in heaven, as to refuse such a discreet desire; yet let not the party by any means think that the sacred nature of the thing he has in view, gives him a power to rob his master of so much of his time: for men can offer nothing to God, with a good conscience, but what is their own; and exercises of devotion are so far from slackening the tie of moral duty to our neighbour, that they are nothing but an outward form of devotion, unacceptable to God, so far as they do not influence the party to a careful

and religious observance of the duties of morality, such as judgment or justice, mercy, and faith or faithfulness, *Mat. xxiii. 23.* Neither let him imagine, on the other hand, that he is then no farther concerned to look after that extraordinary duty: for no reason can be assigned, why one ought not to be willing to be at as much pains or expence, for procuring to himself an opportunity of communion with God in that duty, as he'll be for an opportunity of attending some worldly business of his own, placing another in his room. But if none of these can effectuate it; then, tho' the day or time of labouring is the masters, yet the night or time of resting is the servants; let him give unto God what he has, and it shall be accepted through Christ. But accepting the case of a providential necessity obliging one to take the night for this exercise, the day is, generally speaking, the most proper time for it, beginning the exercise in the morning.

## D I R E C T. II.

Make some preparation for it the night before, turning your thoughts towards the exercise you have in view, considering of it, and avoiding every thing that hath a tendency to unfit or indispose for it. Shun carnal mirth, and sensual delights: sup sparingly; to eat the more, because one is to fast religiously after, is to mock God, and cheat one's self. In the intervals of sleep, take heed, that your thoughts be not vain, and much more that they be not vile; but that they be such as tend to fit you for the extraordinary duty in view.

## D I R E C T. III.

Rise early in the morning; even sooner than ordinary, unless by reason of bodily weakness, that would tend to unfit you for the work: for then you are called, in a special manner, *to watch unto prayer, Eph. vi. 18.* Sleep is a fleshly comfort, which, howbeit it is necessary, yet one is in this case called to be sparing of. Therefore the priests were bid *by all night in sackcloth, Joel i. 13.* and 'tis recorded of

*Ahab*, that he in his fast lay so, *1 Kings* xxi. 27. A proper means to make one sleep sparingly.

## D I R E C T. IV.

As soon as you awake in the morning, let holy thoughts, with a view to your work, immediately have access into your heart. And beware that carnal or worldly thoughts get not the start of them: for if you allow that, they'll be to your soul like water poured upon firewood, that makes it hard to kindle. Surely, if one is at any time to follow the example of the Psalmist *David*, Psalm cxxxix 18. *When I awake, I am still with thee*, he is to do it at such a time.

## D I R E C T. V.

Let your ordinary duties of prayer and of reading the word, be first of all performed: for extraordinary duties are not to juggle out the ordinary, but to be superadded unto them. And, in such prayer, beg of God grace to enable you for the work before you, according to his promise. Yea, it may be very expedient, that thereafter you go again unto God by prayer, particularly and purposely for his grace, to enable you unto the duty now come to the setting to. And forasmuch as our corrupt hearts are, upon a near view of a difficult and laborious holy exercise, very apt to wax faint, and our hands to hang down: albeit *the way of the Lord* is declared to be *strength to the upright*, *Pro.* x. 29. Do you therefore, by all means, study to exercise faith: and labour to believe steadfastly, that *his grace shall be sufficient for you*, to the making of *his yoke easy, and his burden light* unto you, *2 Cor.* xii. 9. with *Mat.* xi. 30. For no man shall ever be able to perform a duty acceptable unto God, without a believing persuasion, in greater or lesser measure, of an allowance made him of *grace sufficient* for an *acceptable* performance of it, *2 Cor.* iii. 4. 5 *Philip.* ii. 12, 13. One will otherwise be but a *wicked and slothful servant*, as our Saviour teacheth, *Mat.* xxv. 24, 25, 26.



## DIRECT. VI.

After prayer in faith, for the aid of divine grace, as in the preceeding direction, begin the work with a solemn review of your sins, in deep meditation, and serious communing with your own heart thereupon; applying yourself to think of them, in such manner as you think of your affairs, when considering how to manage them in cases of difficulty. God calls for this at your hand, *Hag. i. 5. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, consider your ways, Lam. iii. 40. Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.* It is recommended unto us, by the practice of the Saints, *Psal. lxxvii. 6. I communed with mine heart, and my spirit made diligent search. And cxix. 59. I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.* The nature of a religious fast requires it: for, how can the deep humiliation therein to be aimed at, be otherwise obtained? Or what way else can one be fitted to make a confession-suitable to such an occasion? 'Tis observable, that in the fast mentioned, *Neh. ix. the reading of the law* went before the making of the confession, Ver. 3. So the first work was to set the looking-glass before their eyes, that therein every one might see his foul face. And the direction given to fallen *Israel*, in order to a recovery, *Hos. xiv. 2. Take with you words, and say, &c.* doth plainly bear, that there should, in that case, be solemn serious thinking before solemn prayer.

Now to assist you in the practice of this part of your work the following advices are offered.

FIRST, Read some pertinent passage of holy Scripture; and that with application, as reading your own heart and life therein. Such are these passages, which contain discoveries and confession of sin, as *Isa. lix.* or lists of sins, or of several sorts of sinners, as *Rom. i. 29,—32. 2 Cor. vi. 9. 10. Gal. v. 19, 20, 21. 2 Tim. iii. 1,—5. Rev. xxi. 8.* Particularly, I recommend for this purpose, *Ezra ix. Neh. ix. Dan. ix.* Of these, or other Scriptures of the like nature, you may read such as you shall judge meet.

SECONDLY, It will be expedient and useful, in this case, to read also the *larger catechism* on the *ten commands*, in the



*answer to the questions, What is required? And what is forbidden? And especially the latter. For by reading thereof with application to yourself, you will find out your guiltiness in many points, which perhaps would not otherwise come into your mind.*

THIRDLY, This done, apply yourself to think of your sins, in order to your getting a broad and humbling view of your sinful and wretched case. And for your help herein, I suggest to you these things following.

*First,* You may compose yourself, what way you find by experience, to be best for keeping the mind fixed. 'Tis a piece of christian prudence in this case, to dispose of every thing so, as you may the more readily reach that end, and block up the avenues, by which impertinent thoughts may make their entrance. As (1.) Because the eyes often betray the heart, through a variety of objects, which present themselves to one's view in the light; if you are in a house, you may darken it by stopping the light; if in the fields, you may ly down on your face, and close your eyes. (2.) If you can by no means keep your heart at simple thinking, you may speak to yourself with a low voice, that words may help to fix the mind unto the thing. These are only prudential advices, which they that need may use, they that need not may let alone.

*Secondly,* It will be very profitable to observe some method and order, in thinking of your sins. A confused and indeterminate manner of thinking of our sins, doth, in several respects, fall short of an orderly thought about them. 'Tis true, when the Spirit of the Lord is carrying on a special work of conviction in the heart of a sinner, the man's sins will of course be readily laid to hand, and *set in order before his eyes*, *Psal. l. 21.* But it is another case, where one is searching out his sins, with an ordinary assistance of the Spirit: herein, these do not duly consult their own interest, who refuse the help of method in the search.

And there is a twofold method or order, which may be helpful to you therein; to wit, the order of the time of life, and the order of the *ten commandments*. Both these are natural, and easy to the meanest capacity.

Thinking on your sins in the order of the time of your life, you will thereby get a general view of your own sin-

fulness, and that throughout your whole life. And in this method,

*First*, You are to consider the *sin* of your *nature*. You are to look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged, *Isa. li. 1.* Think, what a sinful lump thou wast in thy conception and birth, *shapen in iniquity, conceived in sin, Psal. li. 5.* How thou camest into the world, with cords of guilt wreathed about thy neck, binding thee over to wrath under the curse; striped naked of original righteousness; thy whole nature corrupted, being the very reverse of the holy nature of God: thy soul in all its faculties quite perverted, ready to discover with the first occasion, its *wrong set*, namely, a *propensity to evil*, and an *aversion to good*, and thy body in all its members sinful flesh. In consideration whereof thou mayest well say, with admiration of the Divine patience, *O why did the knees prevent me! Or, why the breasts that I should suck!*

*Secondly*, Then turn your thoughts to the sins of your childhood. *Solomon*, in his penitentials, tells us, That *childhood and youth are vanity, Eccles. xi. 10.* Truly, the sins of that early period of our life, are not to be remembered to be *laught at*, but *mourned over*; and so they will be, by true penitents: for they are the early sproutings and buds of corrupt nature, that might have been fatal to us, ere we had gone further: *Behold*, how in that period *thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldst.* 'Tis likely, that many of these things are forgotten: but yet you may still search out as many of them, as may be matter of deep humiliation unto you before the Lord. There may be sins of childhood, that will make a bleeding wound in a gracious heart, on every remembrance thereof, even unto the dying day.

*Thirdly*, Then take a view of the sins of your youth. *Job* got a moving view of his, when he was come to a good age, *Job xiii. 26.* *Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to profess the iniquities of my youth.* *David's* heart bleeds at the remembrance of his, crying unto God, *Remember not the sins of my youth, Psal. xxv. 7.* Youth is vain, rash, and inconsiderate; and therefore a dangerous period of life; precipitating some into such steps as make them to halt all their life after, proving

fatal to many, and laying up matter of repentance to all. And if the follies of it be not timely repented of and mourned over, by the sinner, they *shall ly down with him in the dust, Job xx. 11.* and present themselves again in full tale, when *for all these God will bring him into judgment, Eccles. xi. 9.* Therefore do you take a mournful view of them, and judge yourselves, in time.

*Fourthly,* If you are come to middle age, proceed to the searching out of the sins of that period of your life. In it you cannot miss of matter of deep humiliation; for *man at his best estate is altogether vanity, Psal. xxxix. 5.* Every period of life is attended with its proper snares and temptations. And he who, right or wrong, hath made his way through these of youth, doth but enter into a new throng of temptations of another kind, while he enters on the next stage of life in the which men often, ere they are aware, *pierce themselves through with many sorrows, lose themselves in a cloud of cares and business, and trouble about many things, forget the one thing needful.*

*Lastly,* If you are advanced unto old age, go forward and view your sins in that period. Whatever infirmities do attend it, the sins of it must be searched out and repented of too: for it will not excuse a man, before a holy God, that he is an aged sinner. The corruption of nature, the longer it hath kept its ground, is the more hateful, and will be the more humbling to a gracious soul.

Thus you'll have your whole life before you, in parcels. And that you may, with the greater distinctness, review any period thereof, which you have fully past, or of which you have past a great part; you may distinguish the same into lesser periods, according to the more notable events, turns, or changes that were in it, and review them separately; as for instance, the time before you went to school, by itself, the time of your being at it, by itself; and so in other cases.

But for a more full and particular view of your sins, do you proceed in the order of the ten commandments. The holy law, considered in its spirituality and vast extent, is the proper means for sound conviction: 'tis the sinners looking-glass, whereby to discern the vast multitude of his spots and defilements, in order to his humiliation. *Rom.*



vii. 7. *I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.* Wherefore, by no means neglect in this review, to go through the *ten commandments*: and pause upon every one of them, considering the duties required therein, and wherein you have been guilty by omission of them; and the sins forbidden therein, and wherein you have been guilty by commission of them; guilty in both kinds, in *thought, word, and deed.* This would be a proper means to shew you the multitude of your transgressions.

But to proceed in both the one and the other order jointly, namely, by reviewing each period of your life separately, in the order of the ten commandments, would, through the divine blessing, be of the most singular use, for reaching the most humbling view of your whole life.

\* Thus far of the second thing suggested, for your help to think of your sins, in order to a humbling view of your case. And for your further help therein.

*Thirdly,* Be sure that in a special manner you set before your eyes the *signal miscarriages* of your life, these sins that have wounded your consciences deepest. I doubt there are but few, if any, of a tender conscience, who see not some such blots in their escutcheon; some remarkable trespasses in heart or life, that are ready to gall them on every remembrance; tho' perhaps known unto none but God and themselves. Good *Eli* had such a blot on him, pointed out to him under the name of *The iniquity which he knoweth*, 1 *Sam.* iii. 13. And the best of the Saints, mentioned in Scripture, had something of that nature to humble them. Now, as ever you would be duly humbled in your exercise of personal fasting, let these, in your review of your sins, be brought forth by head-mark, and set before you in the sight of a holy God; and that, although they be freely pardoned unto you long ago: for the view of these is most likely to affect you; and pardoned sins, inasmuch as they are pardoned; are humbling in the remembrance of them, *Luke* vii. 37, 38, 47. as *Paul's* pardoned blasphemy and persecution were to him, 1 *Tim.* i. 13.

*Fourthly,* In thinking on your sins, take along with you the aggravations of them. Represent to yourself the in-



finite majesty of God, against whom you have sinned : and as ever you would be duly humbled, entertain high and elevated thoughts of the LORD our *Law-giver*. This will make you to say with *David, Psal. li. 4. Against thee, thee, only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight ;* understanding by your own experience what he meant thereby. In your meditation, set God's way of dealing with you, all along from your very birth, over against your way of dealing with him : So shall conviction be brought home on your conscience, with a peculiar edge ; while, considering the mercies he hath heapt on you, the light and warnings he hath afforded you, your guilt will appear of a deepest dy.

*Fifthly*, Having thus seen your extreme sinfulness, consider, in the next place, the just demerit of your sin, even God's *wrath and curse* both in *this life* and that which is to come. For because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience, *Eph. v. 6.* The law is a looking-glass for sinners, not only in its commands, but also in its threatnings and curse ; shewing unto all their cursed state by nature, to unbelievers what they are actually lying under for their sins, and to believers what theirs do deserve. And therefore, after you have, as before directed, gone through all the ten commandments, for your conviction and humiliation ; do you for your further humiliation, set your eyes upon the threatnings and curse of that holy law as a *covenant of works* ; and see therein your just deserving, so as *That God may be justified when he speaketh against you, and clear when he judgeth, Psal. li. 4.* And think with thyself, how thou should'st, without peradventure, *eternally perish* under his *wrath*, if he should proceed against thee according to the law and justice ; as he hath actually proceeded against many, for these very sins wherewith thou art chargeable.

*Sixthly*, In this review of your sins, endeavour all along, that your eye may affect your heart. In vain will you rake into that *dunghill*, if suitable affections or emotions of heart be not thereby excited in you. And these suitable affections are, (1.) *hatred, detestation, and abhorrence* of sin, *Psal. cxix. 128. Rom. xii. 9.* Wherefore, pull the mask from off it, remove the paint and varnish that has

been laid over it, that you may see it in its native deformity; and look on it, until your stomach turn on the sometimes-sweet morsel. (2.) *Grief and sorrow* of heart for it, *Psal.* xxxviii. 18. Let your heart be rent, in consideration of the offence thereby given to a gracious God, its *contrariety* to his holy nature and will, its dishonouring of his Son, who gave himself a sacrifice for sin, and grieving of his Spirit, who sanctifies us. (3.) Holy shame upon the account of it, *Jer.* xxxi. 19. Behold it as a filthy thing, the very reverse of the beauty of holiness, the holiness of God express in his law; and be confounded at the sight. Behold it as a base requital of divine favours, and blush before him. (4) *Self loathing*, *Ezek.* xxxvi. 31. Pursue the thought of the filthiness of your sin, till you lothe yourself in your own sight, as rendered unclean all over, by abominations of heart and life. (5.) A longing to be rid of sin, the guilt, defilement, prevailing, and indwelling of it. Dwell on the thought of your sinfulness, till your heart, pained and burdened therewith, groan out longing desires of deliverance, as *Rom.* vii. 24. *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death! Who will draw this dagger out of my bowels! This sting out of my conscience! This poison out of my flesh? Who will take this load off my back!*

All this would be no more than necessary humiliation. For it will be the lot of every sinner, either in time or in eternity, to be like the fish, that's boil'd in the water which it sometime a day swim'd in. But *blessed are ye that weep now*, *Luke* vi. 21. *Wo unto you that laugh now: for ye shall mourn and weep*, *Ver.* 25.

LASTLY, It will be very necessary that the whole of this work be mixed with devout ejaculations. For, be sure, Satan will be at your right-hand, to resist you, and to mar your work: your heart will be ready to misgive you in it, to stop, and turn aside: therefore press forward in it, lifting up your eyes, every now and then, to the Lord for help.

With this review of your own sins, let a view of the publick sins of the church and land wherein you live, be joined; using the same helps, as in your own particular case, which need not be here repeated.

And in relation to this, I subjoin only three advices.

*First*, Begin always with your own sins: even tho' the principal cause of your fast be the state of the church or land. This has been the manner of the Saints, *Isa. vi. 5. Then said I, Wo is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. Dan. ix. 20. And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin, and the sin of my people Israel.* The reason hereof is manifest: for one will never be duly humbled for the sins of others, who is not in the first place so humbled for his own.

*Secondly*, Represent publick sins to yourself, under such notions as may tend to excite suitable affections and emotions of heart in you. Look on them as they are dishonouring to our gracious God, wounding or ruining to the souls of men, disgraceful to our holy Christian profession, and provoking God to wrath against the land. Hate and lothe them, be asham'd of them, and mourn over them, on these accounts; and long for the day of purging them away.

*Lastly*, See your own sinful part in them, by all means. Bring them home to your own conscience, before the Lord: search out, and see, what of the guilt thereof you are, either directly or indirectly, chargeable with, in his sight; and be deeply humbled for the same.

Thus far of the review of sin.

#### DIRECT. VII.

After this review of your sins made, go unto God by prayer, and make confession of them. And here, confession is to be the chief part of your prayer: yea, and if the whole of it almost be confession, it will not be amiss. Certainly extraordinary confession of sin, is a great part of the work of a religious fast, *Neh. ix. 3. Dan. ix. 20.* And the solemn review, in which one's sins are so particularly search'd out, natively issues therein.

For the more profitable management of this confession of sin, the following advices are offered.

*FIRST*, Take no thought of your voice, farther than to keep it from being unseasonably high. For the voice,



in itself, is nothing before the heart-searching God, who regards not the sound of mens throats, but of their hearts and affections. *The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him, John iv. 23.* But sometimes there is a deceit in the voice, to the beguiling of the soul, as it fared with *Ezekiel's hearers, with the mouth shewing much love, Ezek. xxxiii. 31.* And one, by an indiscreet management of it, may be fruitlessly weakned; and unfitted for continuing at the work, so as need may require. The affections are the best rulers of the voice.

SECONDLY, Endeavour to bring along into your confession, and carry along, these affections and emotions of heart; of which before; namely, *hatred and detestation of sin, godly sorrow, holy shame, self-loathing, and longing to be rid of sin, Psal. xxxviii. 18. I will declare mine iniquity, I will be sorry for my sin.* When the leper was to cry *unclean, unclean*, his clothes were to be rent, his head bare, and there was to be a covering upon his upper lip, *Lev. xiii. 45.* A confessing tongue requires a broken heart, a spirit really weighted with a sense of sin. And the marble, that sweats in foul weather, but yet is never a whit the softer, shall be an emblem of one confessing his sin with a hale heart. Yet let none sensible of the hardness of their heart, be thereby made to stand aloof from confession, saying, *Who will roll away the stone?* Let them go forward, and essay it: let them confess their hardness of heart, and unsuitness to make confession; for so they may find the stone rolled away to their hand.

THIRDLY, Be as full as you can in your confession; laying all your spiritual sores before the Lord, so far as you know them. One wound concealed from the physician, may prove fatal to the patient: and one sin industriously past over in confession, may prove fatal to the sinner; for *he that covereth his sins shall not prosper, Prov. xxviii. 13.* David was aware of this, *Psal. xxxii. 5. I acknowledged my sins unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid.* It fared ill with *Ananias and Sapphira*, for that, in another case, they *lied unto God*, and *kept back a part, Acts v.* And he's no true penitent, that desires to hide any sweet morsel un-



der his tongue, and is not willing to take shame to himself for every known sin.

FOURTHLY, Be very particular in your confession, opening out your spiritual sores before the Lord, *Psalms* li. 4. *I have done this evil in thy sight.* *Josh.* vii. 20. *I have sinned, — and thus and thus have I done.* To confess the several kinds of your sins in general, without descending to particulars, is too superficial work on such an occasion. The particular abominations of your heart and life, are raised up in meditation, to be laid before the Lord in humble confession. I suppose you to be at this work in a secret place, where you may freely utter before him, what it would not be proper you should say in the hearing of others. No doubt, a great deal of freedom may be used in secret prayer, in narrating of thoughts and actions, with the designation of time, place, and persons, so as may tend to one's deeper humiliation; which would not be to edification, in social prayer.

Now, in order to your being the more full and particular in your confession, I would recommend the same method and order to be observed therein, as in the review of your sins. I believe, that, so doing, you will find the advantage of it. Go orderly through the several periods of your life, and through all the *ten commandments*, making your confession; where also you may take in the confession of publick sins, always so as may best tend to the farther humiliation of yourself. In a special manner, be very particular as to the signal miscarriages of your life: and aggravate your guilt, acknowledging the aggravating circumstances thereof. And unto the confession of your known sins, against all the *ten commandments*, add a humble acknowledgment of a large void and blank to be left for your UNKNOWN sins against every one of them; which you can by no means fill up, but the all-knowing God can: for, *Who can understand his errors?* *Psalms* xix. 12. And, considering the commands of the perfect law, as binding you to embrace the gospel, confess your atrocious guilt in sinning against the remedy of sin, therein revealed, offered, and exhibited unto you.

FIFTHLY, It will be profitable, that all along through your confession, you approve of the law, as *holy, just,*

and good, *Rom. vii. 12* For as black doth best appear, when set by white; so sin appears most clearly in its native hue, exceeding sinful, when set over against the pure, holy, just, and good commandment. As, for example, when you are to confess your sins against the first commandment, you may say to this purpose *Lord, thou commandest me, saying, Thou shalt have no other gods before me. I acknowledge, This thy command is most just and reasonable in itself, and most good for me. It was thou alone who madest it, thou alone has preserv'd me--- I never needed another God besides thee, and none but thee could ever do the part of a God to me; --- thou didst magnify thy rich grace, in condescending to be, in Christ, a God to me a most wretched creature. Nevertheless, over the belly of this law of love, my duty, and my interest, I have had many other gods before thee: I have set up my cursed self in thy room and stead,---made the vain world my god.---&c.* And so in other cases.

LASTLY, Let your confession be closed with self-condemning; self-emptying, and a look of faith.

First, Condemn yourself, as did the returning prodigal, *Luke xv. 18. Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee. Ver. 19. And am no more worthy to be called thy son.* As you looked to the commandments before, and confess your sin; so look now to the threatnings and curse of the law, and confess your just deserving. Read there your deserved doom, and pass sentence against yourself. Nothing is more natural, than that now you call yourself fool and beast, for that you have followed the wild fire of your corrupt inclinations, to the myring of yourself thus in sin and guilt; and have broken over the hedge, where now you find the serpent biting you. And here,

First, Confess you deserve no good, but all evil, in time. If the cause of your fall be some evil you are at present imarting under, acknowledge God to be just, very just in it. If it is some stroke threatned, and hanging over your head, confess that you well deserve it should fall on you in its full weight. If it is light you want, confess you deserve to be left in darkness: or, whatever be the mercy you come to make supplication for, acknowledge from the heart, that you have forfeited it. Surely, in case your

*uncircumcised heart be humbled, you will accept of the punishment of your iniquity, Lev. xxvi. 41.* And then, if your sin has found you out, you will own the procedure against you to be *righteous* and holy: if your broken bones smart, you'll say, 'tis just: if the Lord has turned his former smiles into frowns, mixed your comforts with gall and wormwood, sowing them so as to set your teeth on edge, blasted your enjoyments, and squeezed the sap out of them, you will, after confession of sin, say from your very heart, *my folly makes it so.*

*Secondly,* Confess you deserve eternally to perish, and that *it is of the Lord's mercies you are not consumed, Lam. iii. 22.* that God might, in justice, wrap you up in the filthy garments of your sin, and cast you out of his sight, into the lake burning with fire and brimstone, as the fittest place for such a *sinful lump*. Acknowledge yourself to be, in yourself, a wretched creature justly under the *curse* and *condemnatory sentence* of the law, having nothing to say for yourself, at the bar of justice; why it may not be fully executed against you, a self-condemned, as well as a law-condemned, sinner, *Psal. li. 4.* Whatever your state be in the sight of God, 'tis altogether just, that your libel against yourself, be not concluded without this.

*Secondly,* Be emptied of yourself, in a humble and hearty acknowledgment of your utter inability to help yourself. Having taken a view of the load of sin lying upon you, and laid before the Lord the particulars of your burden, with the sinking weight thereof; acknowledge that it is quite beyond your power to move it from off you. Say from the heart, *Lord, here's a load of guilt lying upon me, which, by no doing or suffering of mine, can be removed: here's a mighty power of sin, I am no more able to grapple with, than a little child with a giant; a dead weight, I can no more remove, than I can remove a mountain. If thou leavest me under it, as justly thou mayest, I perish.*

This is true humiliation, when the poor broken sinner lies at the LORD's feet, sensible, that he is bound with ten thousand cords of guilt, but unable to loose the weakest of them; that his soul is preyed upon, and like to be devoured, by a swarm of living lusts, yet unable to kill or shake off any of them. If we are dully humbled, our



and good, *Rom. vii. 12* For as black doth best appear, when set by white; so sin appears most clearly in its native hue, exceeding sinful, when set over against the pure, holy, just, and good commandment. As, for example, when you are to confess your sins against the first commandment, you may say to this purpose *Lord, thou commandest me, saying, Thou shalt have no other gods before me. I acknowledge, This thy command is most just and reasonable in itself, and most good for me. It was thou alone who madest it, thou alone has preserv'd me:— I never needed another God besides thee, and none but thee could ever do the part of a God to me;— thou didst magnify thy rich grace, in condescending to be, in Christ, a God to me a most wretched creature. Nevertheless, over the belly of this law of love, my duty, and my interest, I have had many other gods before thee: I have set up my cursed self in thy room and stead,—made the vain world my god.—&c.* And so in other cases.

LASTLY, Let your confession be closed with *self-condemning, self-emptying, and a look of faith.*

*First*, Condemn yourself, as did the returning prodigal, *Luke xv. 18. Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee. Ver. 19. And am no more worthy to be called thy son.* As you looked to the commandments before, and confess your sin; so look now to the threatnings and curse of the law, and confess your just deserving. Read there your deserved doom, and pass sentence against yourself. Nothing is more natural, than that now you call yourself fool and beast, for that you have followed the wild fire of your corrupt inclinations, to the myring of yourself thus in sin and guilt; and have broken over the hedge, where now you find the serpent biting you. And here,

*First*, Confess you deserve no good, but all evil, in time. If the cause of your fall be some evil you are at present smarting under, acknowledge God to be just, very just in it. If it is some stroke threatned, and hanging over your head, confess that you well deserve it should fall on you in its full weight. If it is light you want, confess you deserve to be left in darkness: or, whatever be the mercy you come to make supplication for, acknowledge from the heart, that you have forfeited it. Surely, in case your



*uncircumcised heart be humbled, you will accept of the punishment of your iniquity, Lev. xxvi. 41. And then, if your sin has found you out, you will own the procedure against you to be righteous and holy: if your broken bones smart, you'll say, 'tis just: if the Lord has turned his former smiles into frowns, mixed your comforts with gall and wormwood, sowing them so as to set your teeth on edge, blasted your enjoyments, and squeezed the sap out of them, you will, after confession of sin, say from your very heart, my folly makes it so.*

*Secondly, Confess you deserve eternally to perish, and that it is of the Lord's mercies you are not consumed, Lam. iii. 22. that God might, in justice, wrap you up in the filthy garments of your sin, and cast you out of his sight, into the lake burning with fire and brimstone, as the fittest place for such a sinful lump. Acknowledge yourself to be, in yourself, a wretched creature justly under the curse and condemnatory sentence of the law, having nothing to say for yourself, at the bar of justice, why it may not be fully executed against you, a self-condemned, as well as a law-condemned, sinner, Psalm li. 4. Whatever your state be in the sight of God, 'tis altogether just, that your libel against yourself, be not concluded without this.*

*Secondly, Be emptied of yourself, in a humble and hearty acknowledgment of your utter inability to help yourself. Having taken a view of the load of sin lying upon you, and laid before the Lord the particulars of your burden, with the sinking weight thereof; acknowledge that it is quite beyond your power to move it from off you. Say from the heart, Lord, here's a load of guilt lying upon me, which, by no doing or suffering of mine, can be removed: here's a mighty power of sin, I am no more able to grapple with, than a little child with a giant; a dead weight, I can no more remove, than I can remove a mountain. If thou leavest me under it, as justly thou mayest, I perish.*

This is true humiliation, when the poor broken sinner lies at the LORD's feet, sensible, that he is bound with ten thousand cords of guilt, but unable to loose the weakest of them; that his soul is preyed upon, and like to be devoured, by a swarm of living lusts, yet unable to kill or shake off any of them. If we are dully humbled, our

humiliation will be carried thus far: for 'tis the ruin of many that they see not the absolute need of the blood of Christ, for removing of their guilt; and far less, the absolute need of his Spirit, for breaking of the power of sin in them.

*Lastly*, Let there be a look of faith out of the low dungeon. Look unto God in Christ, and say, *God be merciful to me a sinner*, Luke xviii. 13. And *turn thou me, and I shall be turned*, Jer. xxxi. 18. Tell him, That since, according to his holy gospel, there is yet hope in *Israel* concerning this thing, you must and will take the benefit of the gospel-proclamation of grace and mercy, and lay hold on the horns of the altar: and therefore, though your weight be heavier than mountains of brass, you do, with humble confidence, at the Father's bidding, lay it wholly over on the blood of his Son the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting thereon allenarly for remission of sin, sanctification, and complete salvation.

Now, as to the two directions last mentioned, I mean not, that what is proposed in either of them, must needs be done all at once, without intermission. You may use them, as you are best able to reach them. It is not very likely, that these who spent one fourth part of the day, in *confessing and worshipping*, Neh. ix. 3. did make but one confession continued without intermission. So you may make such intermissions in either or both of them, as you find necessary. Christian prudence must direct in the matter, to use the means, so as may best conduce to the end.

#### DIRECT. VIII.

After confession of sin, apply yourself to the duty of *personal covenanting*, explicite entering into, or renewing, covenant with God, by taking hold of God's *covenant of grace*, in exprefs words. That this is a necessary part of the work of a *personal fast*, may be gathered from Jer. l. 4. and Neh. x. 28. both cited before. And it is clear from the nature of the thing. For to what purpose shall men lay open their wounds before the Phylician of souls, if they mind not to put themselves in his hand for cure, in the way of the covenant? Or, how can they pretend to

mourn for sin, if they are not to enter on the way of *reformation*? A time of personal fasting, is a time for the runaway to return to his duty, and to set matters right again, that were put wrong by turning aside from God and his way. And one unwilling to enter into covenant with God, cannot be sincere in his confession of sin, and mourning over it, whatever he may pretend.

For the right managing of this duty of *personal covenanting*, these three following advices are offered.

FIRST, See that ye understand, and rightly take up the covenant, the covenant of grace; together with the way and manner of a sinner's personal entering into it, and being enstated in it unto salvation: the which are to be learned from the holy Scripture alone, as being revealed in it only. Mistakes and misapprehensions of these things may be of very bad consequence in the practice of this duty; for which cause men ought earnestly to pray, that God would, by his own Word and Spirit, *shew them his covenant*, according to the promise, *Psalms xxv. 14.*

According to the Scripture, the COVENANT, namely, The *Covenant of grace* for life and salvation, is not left unto you to make, in whole or in part, by proposing and condescending on terms thereof, as a party-contractor: it is made already, compleatly made and concluded in all the articles thereof, whether conditionary or promissory; and that, between God the party-contractor on heaven's side, and CHRIST as Mediator and second *Adam* the party-contractor on lost man's side. And it is registered in the sacred records, the holy Scripture. And you are invited unto the fellowship of it, *Psalms lxxxix. 3. I have made a covenant with my chosen—David my servant. 1 Cor. xv. 45. The last Adam. 1 John i. 3. That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ.*

The CONDITION of it is *Christ's fulfilling all righteousness*, in the name of his spiritual seed, *Mat. iii. 15. Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.* This righteousness was stated from the broken covenant of works; and that in three things, namely, perfect holiness of nature, righteousness of life, and satisfaction for sin: all which



CHRIST did fulfil, in his being born perfectly holy, living perfectly righteous, and making compleat satisfaction by his death and sufferings. And thus the condition of the covenant, on which is founded the right and claim to the promises of it, is fulfilled already to your hand.

The PROMISE of it, respecting lost sinners, is the promise of eternal life, in its full latitude, comprehending all things necessary to make a sinner holy and happy; that God in Christ will be *their God*, and they shall be *his people*, *Tim. i. 2.* *In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began, Heb. viii. 10.* This is the covenant, — *I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.* And it is begun to be fulfilled to all, who have taken hold of the covenant; and is ready to be fulfilled unto all, who yet shall take hold thereof.

This Covenant is the plan laid by infinite wisdom for the salvation of lost sinners; upon which they may safely venture themselves, for time and eternity, as upon a bottom infallibly sure, *Isa. lv. 3.* *I will make an everlasting covenant with you, (Heb. I will cut to you an everlasting covenant) even the sure mercies of David. 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.* *We preach Christ-- Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.* It is heaven's device for repairing the loss we sustained by *Adam's fall*, whereby we became unholy and miserable, lying in ignorance which we could not cure, under guilt and the curse which we could not remove, and under bondage to sin and Satan which we could not break, *Ver. 30.* *But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.*

The great *design* of it, is to exalt the free grace of God, in the salvation of sinners; to shew therein the exceeding riches of his grace to them, in Christ. 'Tis a plan laid for cutting off all ground of boasting from the creature; to make Christ all, and the creature nothing in its own salvation, as being indebted to free grace for the whole thereof, *Eph. i. 6.* *To the praise of the glory of his grace.* Chap. ii. 7. *That he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus, Ver. 9.* *Not of works, lest any man should boast.* 'Tis much like unto a contract of marriage, de-



vised and drawn by a wealthy and wise physician, of his own proper motive alone, between himself and a poor woman, drowned in debt, weak and witless, and withal over-run with lothesome sores, rendring her incapable to do any thing, whether for her own relief, or for his service: and this, upon a design to have her wholly indebted to him for her relief, the payment of her debt, the management of her person, and her recovery for action and business.

This covenant is Offered and exhibited to you, in the gospel; as really, as that contract drawn and signed by the physician, would be offered and exhibited to the woman, if he should come and present it to her, for her acceptance, *Rom. x. 6. Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven?* (that is, to bring Christ down from above) *Ver. 7. Or, who shall descend into the deep?* (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead. *Ver. 8. But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach.* So that the righteousness of Christ, to wit, the holiness of nature wherewith he was born, and which he retained unspotted till death, the righteousness of his life, and his satisfaction made by his sufferings, is in that word freely offered and exhibited to you, as the fulfilled condition of the covenant, being therein *revealed unto faith*, *Rom. i. 17. Gr.* as also, the *promise of eternal life*, as the *promise of the covenant, to be fulfilled*, being therein *left you*, *Heb. iv. 1.*

Hence it appears, that the duty of *personal covenanting* is much mistaken and mismanaged, where the party apprehending that God, in the word, declares himself willing to be his God, upon certain terms to be by him performed, different from accepting God's full and free covenant of promise, does accordingly make a covenant with God, solemnly taking him for his God upon these terms; promising and vowing, That if God will be his God, pardon his sins, be at peace with him, and save his soul, he will, for his part, be one of his people, and faithfully serve him all the days of his life, watching against all known sin, and performing every known duty. This is just as if the woman, in the case before put, should tell

him who offers her the contract, That she is content to take him for her husband, upon certain terms ; particularly, That if he will be *her husband*, and do the duty of a husband to her, she will, for her part, be a faithful wife to him, all the days of her life, doing all that she is able to do, for paying off her debt, managing herself and his household to the best of her skill, and taking all pains on her fores to make her lovely in his eyes: the which being quite contrary to the design and end of that unusal kind of contract, which is, to have the wife wholly indebted to the husband for all, doth alter the nature of the proposal, and would quite mar the surprising match, which was in a fair way to be carried on.

But, likeas in that case, nothing remains for the woman to do, to entitle her to the benefit of the contract, but believing it to be a real and serious, and not a ludicrous deed, to sign her acceptance ; which signing with the hand is necessary, because her belief of the reality of the offered contract, and trusting to it accordingly, being inward acts of the soul, cannot be known among men, but by a proper external sign: even so, all that remains for you, to *enstate* you savingly in God's *covenant of grace*, offered and exhibited to you in the gospel, is to *take hold* of it, *Isa.* lvi. 4.

And to the end that, in your aiming to take hold of the covenant, you may not be at a loss fearing that you may miss any part or parts thereof, lying scattered through the blessed Bible ; know, that *Jesus Christ*, the second *Adam*, head of the covenant, is by his Father *given for a covenant* to you, *Isa.* xlix. 8. So that you have the whole covenant in him ; and take hold of it, by taking hold of him offered and exhibited to you in the free promise of the gospel.

And this is done by *Faith*, or *Believing* on his name, according to *John* i. 12. *As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.* Wherefore, by *believing on the name of Christ*, we take hold of the covenant, and are *enstated* in it unto salvation. And God hath made *Believing* to be the means of *enstating* sinners personally and savingly in the covenant, in consonancy with the great design and

end thereof, declared in the word, and of which before. *Rom. v. 16. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by Grace. Chap. iii. 27. Where is Boasting then? it is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.*

Now, to believe in the name of Christ, is to believe or Credit the free promise of the gospel with application to yourself, and accordingly to Trust on him as the Saviour of the world, and your Saviour, in whom God will be your God, and you shall be one of his people, unto your salvation from sin and from wrath. *Mark i. 15. Believe the Gospel. Gal. iii. 2. The hearing of faith. 1 Thess. i. 5. Our gospel came not to you in word only, but also in power, and in the holy Ghost, and in much assurance. 1 Cor. ii. 4. In demonstration of the Spirit and of power. Ver. 5. That your faith should stand——in the power of God. And Acts xvi. 31. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Psalm xxxvii. 40. He shall save them, because they trust in him. And ii. 12. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him. Acts xv. 11. We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved. This Believing, or crediting the word, and trusting on the Person, of Christ, is that which of all things is farthest removed from the nature of a work, according to the scripture use of that word; and therefore is the most agreeable means of saving entrance into that covenant, which is of faith, that it might be by grace: not of works, lest any man should boast.*

A sinner, being by his believing on Christ, United to him as the Head of the covenant, is thereby personally entered into the covenant; so as, in his right, to have a saving interest in the condition, promise and privileges thereof unto his eternal salvation: even as becoming, through natural generation, children of Adam the head of the covenant of works, we are personally entered into that covenant; so as to be involved in the guilt of the breach of it, and laid under the curse thereof. *Rom. v. 19. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. John x. 9. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved. Eph. iii. 17. That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.*



Upon this believing on the name of Christ, crediting and trusting in manner said before, do necessarily follow, an absolute CONSENT to take him for our Husband, Head, and Lord, and God in him for our God; an unconditional *renunciation* of ourselves unto him, soul and body, to be his only, wholly, and for ever; with an *illimated renunciation* of all other for him; even as, in the case before put, upon the woman's believing the reality of the offer of the contract of marriage between the physician and her, and accordingly, that he will indeed be her husband, follows her consenting to take him for her husband, head and lord, giving up herself unto him, and renouncing all other for him, absolutely, conditionally, without limitation or reservation; the which she can never do, till once she believe that. And thus, to the word of grace, the covenant offered and exhibited in the gospel, *I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people*, the believing soul answereth, as an echo, *My beloved is mine, and I am his*, Cant. ii. 16.

SECONDLY, Having understood the covenant aright, together with the way and manner of being personally and savingly entered into it, examine yourself anent it impartially, as ever you would make sure work, in this weighty matter. Enquire into your sense of your need of the covenant, your belief of it, and the disposition of your heart towards it. And upon these heads, pose yourself with these, or the like questions.

‘ In the *first* place, O my soul, do I verily believe,  
 ‘ That I was lost, ruined, and undone in *Adam*, by his  
 ‘ breaking of the covenant of works; and, That I have  
 ‘ ruined myself more and more, by my actual transgressi-  
 ‘ ons? Do I believe, That I am by nature, wholly corrupt  
 ‘ and sinful, averse to good, prone to evil, and justly laid  
 ‘ under the curse, binding me over to the revenging wrath  
 ‘ of God for time and eternity? Am I convinced, That I  
 ‘ am utterly unable to help myself in whole or in part,  
 ‘ out of this gulf of sin and misery into which I am plung’d  
 ‘ and, That I must needs perish under the guilt, domi-  
 ‘ nion, and pollution of my sin, without being justified,  
 ‘ or sanctified, for ever, if I be not relieved by Heaven’s  
 ‘ own hand?’



‘ Next, O my soul, do I believe, that there is a covenant of grace, for the relief of lost sinners, established between God the Father, and his Son, Jesus Christ, as second *Adam*, wherein upon condition of Christ’s fulfilling all righteousness, as a publick person, is promised eternal life to them, that God in Christ will be their God, and they shall be his people? Do I believe, that this is the plan and device of heaven, for life and salvation to lost sinners, for making of them holy, and for making of them happy? Do I believe, that Jesus Christ hath, by his holy birth, righteous life, satisfactory death and sufferings, performed that condition of the covenant, and thereby purchased and secured the benefit therein promised, for poor sinners? Then, do I indeed believe, that this covenant already fulfill’d in its condition, and certainly to be fulfill’d in its promise, is, in CHRIST crucified, really offered and exhibited to me, in the gospel; and, that I am called to the fellowship of it in him? And then, do I verily *believe on the name* of Christ crucified, offered and exhibited to me, as the great High-Priest, who, by the sacrifice of himself, hath made the atonement, pay’d the ransom, and brought in everlasting righteousness for poor sinners? That is to say, (1.) Can I credit his word of grace to me, that he with his righteousness will be mine, and in him God will be my God, and I shall be one of his people? (2.) And can I, as on a safe bottom, trust on him as my Saviour, that in him it shall be so unto me, to my eternal life and salvation, to the making of me holy and happy?

‘ Finally, O my soul, how do I like the covenant? Am I pleased with the frame of it, whereby Christ was from eternity appointed, not only the Priest of the covenant, to fulfill the condition of it, but also the Prophet and the King thereof, to administer it? And, can I find in my heart to acquiesce in that device for salvation, as all my salvation, and all my desire, for making me holy and happy? Am I content to take Christ the Son of God, for my only PRIEST, Surety, Intercessor, and Redeemer; and, in him, the FATHER for my Father, and the HOLY GHOST for my Sanctifier; GOD in CHRIST for my God? Am I willing wholly to resign myself, soul

‘ and body, to him, to be saved by his blood alone, re-  
 ‘ nouncing all confidence in my own righteousness, do-  
 ‘ ings, and sufferings? Am I content to take him for my  
 ‘ *Head and Husband?* Particularly, Am I content to take  
 ‘ him for my alone *PROPHET, Oracle and Guide;* to resign  
 ‘ and give up myself wholly to him, to be *taught*, guid-  
 ‘ ed, and directed in all things, by his Word and Spirit;  
 ‘ renouncing mine own wisdom, and the wisdom of this  
 ‘ world? Am I content to take him for my alone *KING*  
 ‘ and Lord? to resign myself wholly, soul and body, un-  
 ‘ to him to be rescued by his power from sin, death, the  
 ‘ devil, and this present evil world, to serve him for ever,  
 ‘ and to be ruled by the will of his command, as to my  
 ‘ duty; and the will of his providence, as to my lot?  
 ‘ And am I heartily content to part with, and renounce  
 ‘ every known *SIN*, and particularly that which most easi-  
 ‘ ly besets me; together with my own foolish will, and  
 ‘ all other lords besides him; without reservation, and  
 ‘ without exception against his cross? And am I really,  
 ‘ as in his sight, willing to have discovered unto me, and  
 ‘ upon discovery to part with every sin in me, that I  
 ‘ know not?

Now, howbeit all doubting as to such of these points,  
 as are points of faith; and every the least degree of aver-  
 sion to the consenting, resignation, and renunciation, is  
 sin before the Lord, and needs to be purged away by the  
 Redeemer’s blood; yet they ought not to stop your pro-  
 ceeding, unless they be predominant over your belief and  
 willingness in the matter, *Mark ix. 24. Lord, I believe,*  
*help thou my unbelief. Gal. v. 17. The flesh lusteth against*  
*the spirit———so that ye cannot do the things that ye*  
*would*, namely, in that perfection, that ye fain would do  
 them. But indeed, if they are predominant, keeping  
 your mind and heart quite unsettled, and wavering like a  
 wave of the sea, that hath nothing to fix it; one cannot  
 advise proceeding in that case; for that would be to lie  
 unto the Lord, with a witness. *James i. 6. For he that*  
*wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind,*  
*and tossed. Ver. 7. For let not that man think that he shall*  
*receive any thing of the Lord.* Howbeit, a sincere belief  
 and willingness in these points, may indeed waver like a

ship at anchor, which is still held fast in the place, notwithstanding of all its wavering therein. And one may take hold of God's covenant of grace, unto salvation, even with a trembling hand.

LASTLY, Having in your self-examination, satisfied your conscience, to as those points, go unto *God* by prayer, and therein solemnly, and in express words, take hold of the covenant: the which may be done, in words to this purpose.

' O LORD, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, I confess I am by nature a lost sinner, wholly corrupted, and laid under the curse, in *Adam*, through the breach of the covenant of works; and have ruined myself more and more by my actual transgressions innumerable. I am convinced and do acknowledge, That I am utterly unable to help myself, in whole or in part out of this gulf of sin and misery, into which I am plunged; and that it is beyond the reach of the whole creation, to help me out of it: so that I must inevitably perish for ever, if thine own strong hand do not make help to me.'

' But forasmuch as, there is a covenant of grace, for life and salvation to lost sinners, established between *thee*, and thine own *Son* the Lord Jesus Christ, as second *Adam*; wherein, upon condition of his fulfilling all righteousness, which is now performed in his having been born perfectly holy, lived altogether righteously, and made perfect satisfaction to justice, by his death and sufferings; thou hast promised, that thou wilt be their God, and they shall be thy people, to the making of them holy and happy for ever: and that this covenant is, in *Christ* the Head thereof, offered and exhibited to me, in thy gospel; and thou callest me into the fellowship of it, in him. Therefore, upon the warrant of, and in obedience to thy command and call, I, a poor perishing sinner, do take hold of that *Covenant*, for life and salvation to me; believing on the name of *Christ* crucified, the Head thereof, offered and exhibited to me, as the great High-priest, who, by the sacrifice of himself, hath made atonement, paid the ransom, and brought in everlasting righteousness for poor sinners. I credit his word



of grace to me, and accordingly *trust* on him, that he with his righteousness will be mine, and that in and through him, God will be my God, and I shall be one of his people, to the making of me holy and happy for ever.

‘ O my God, I do by thy grace acquiesce in that covenant, as my salvation, and all my desire. With my whole heart and soul, the *Son* incarnate is my only *Priest*, my *Surety*, my *Intercessor*, and my *Redeemer*; and in him, the *Father* my *Father*, the *Holy Ghost* my *Sanctifier*; *God* in *Christ* my *God*. I resign myself, soul and body, to him, to be saved by his blood alone; renouncing all confidence in mine own righteousness, doings, and sufferings. With my whole heart and soul, he is my *Head* and *Husband*. And I am his only, wholly, and for ever; to live by him, to him, and for him. I take him for my alone *Prophet*, Oracle and Guide; give up myself wholly to him, to be taught, guided, and directed, in all things, by his Word and Spirit; and renounce mine own wisdom, and the wisdom of this world. He is with my heart’s consent, my alone *King* and *Lord*. And I resign myself wholly, soul and body, unto him, to be rescued by the strength of his mighty, hand, from sin, death, the devil, and this present evil world, to serve him for ever, and to be ruled by the will of his command, as to my duty; and the will of his providence, as to my lot. I am with my whole heart content (Lord thou knowest) to part with, and do renounce every known sin, lust, or idol, and particularly my — the sin which most easily besets me; together with my own foolish will, and all other lords besides him; without reservation, and without exception against his cross. Protesting in thy sight, O Lord, that I am, through grace, willing to have discovered unto me, and upon discovery to part with every sin in me that I know not: and that the doubtings and averfeness of heart mixed with this my accepting of thy covenant, are what I allow not; and that notwithstanding thereof, I look to be accepted of thee herein, in the beloved thine only Son and my Saviour, purging away these, with all my other sins, by his precious blood.

‘ Let it be recorded in heaven, O Lord, and let —

‘and whatever is here present, bear witness, that I, tho’ most unworthy, have this day here taken hold of, and come into, thy covenant of grace, offered and exhibited to me in thy gospel; and that thou art my God in the tenor of that covenant, and I am one of thy people, from henceforth and for ever.’

## D I R E C T. IX.

After covenanting with God, set yourself to ply the throne of grace by prayer and supplication, with reference to what is the particular cause, or causes of your fast. This is surely the proper order: for then is one in best case to make special requests unto the Lord, when by application of the blood of Christ, in taking hold of the covenant, his conscience is purged; whereas, if one falls to that work before this, he cannot have the confidence towards God necessary in this case, 1 *John* iii. 20, 21.

And for the right managing hercof, the following Advices are offered.

*First*, As it is fit you should, the night before, condescend in your own mind, on the causes of your fast: so now again you should review them, partly, that the things, which you are to lay before the Lord in prayer and supplication, may be ready before you; and partly, that you may be duly affected therewith.

*Secondly*, Then go to prayer, and present your petitions anent them, to your covenanted God. And pray again and again on these heads, as you shall find your case to require: for the time is set apart for that very end, that you may have opportunity to wrestle with God, in prayers and supplications thereanent.

*Thirdly*, In these prayers, let there be a holy mixture of humility suitable to our unworthiness, of fervency suitable to our pressing needs, and of confidence in God suitable to the access unto him, allowed us by the covenant: the which are the special ingredients in prevailing prayer.

1. In all your addresses to the throne of grace, continue a humble supplicant, not forgetting, but maintaining a due sense of your sinfulness, vileness, and unworthiness of the mercies you make suit for. *Lord I am*

*not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof, saith the centurion, Mat. viii. 8. I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, saith Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 10.* Due humility will oblige you to look on yourself as absolutely unworthy of spiritual mercies, tho', in the mean time, you see an absolute need of them: it will keep you from being peremptory in the matter of temporal mercies, and dispose you to a holy submission unto the will of God therein: and it will engage you, in matters of light, to lay yourself fairly open to the Divine determination.

If, in this last case, your own inclination do sway you to any one side; yet be sure to have no regard to it before to Lord, but come unto him, as it were, in an equipoise, to be cast to what side he will. Such are the *meek he will guide in judgment, the meek he will teach his way, Psal'm xxv. 9.* Unfair dealing with God in this case, is exceeding sinful and dangerous. They who venture on it, are therein dissemblers: and will readily throw off their mask, if the answer of God fall not in with the side that their inclination is on; they will repel it; they will not see it, but will take their own way notwithstanding, to the provoking of the eyes of his glory; whereof we have a remarkable instance in the *Jews* consulting God as to what they should do, while, in the mean time, they were aforehand resolved what to do, being bent to go to *Egypt, Jer. xli. 17.* Chap. xlii. 1, — 6, 19, 20. Chap. xliii. 2. 7. Such dealing with God, in the matter of light, sometimes provokes him to give men their will, with a vengeance. Thus *Balaam* got an answer from God, plainly notifying to him, that he should not go with *Balak's* messengers, *Numb. xxii. 12.* But that answer not suiting his inclinations, which were towards *the wages of unrighteousness, 2 Pet. ii. 15.* he went back for another answer more agreeable thereto, and in wrath he got it, *Ver. 19, 20, 21, 22.*

2. Be fervent in your addresses, *labouring fervently in prayers, Col. iv. 12.* On such occasions, the body is afflicted, that the spirit may become the more earnest in supplication; the ordinary weight of worldly incumbrances is laid aside, that the soul may the more readily take wing, and mount heavenward. *The effectual fervent*



*prayer of a righteous man availeth much, James v. 16.*

3. Pray with confidence in God, through Jesus Christ; believingly, not doubtingly, and distrustfully, *Mat. xxi. 22. And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.* Whether your petitions be for temporal or spiritual mercies, present them to the Father in the name of Christ, according to the promises of the covenant relative thereto; believing, and being confident on the ground of the merit and intercession of the Mediator, that God will do the best in your case, that *your labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*, and that what is for his glory and your good, shall not be withheld from you, *Psalms lxxxv. 12. 1 Cor. xv. 58. Psalm lxxxiv. 11.*

4. In the intervals of prayer, give yourself to some godly exercise, such as singing of psalms, reading of the word, or meditation. And particularly, if you be seeking light into a matter you may enter on, thinking about, in order to your clearing therein; weighing circumstances with dependance on the Lord, according to the promise, *Psalms xxxii. 8. I will instruct thee; and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.* And, specially, if you are seeking light into the state of your soul; here is a favourable nick of time for it; the marks and evidences of a gracious state, being, upon the back of covenanting with God, in a fair way to be discovered, to the satisfaction of the sincere soul.

*Lastly*, Lay no weight on the quantity of your prayers; that is to say, How long, or how many they are. These things avail nothing with God, by whom prayers are not measured, but weighed. And what makes the weight in them, is the faith, fervency, and humility therein: so that one of these groanings mentioned, *Rom. viii. 26.* will downweigh a whole day's prayers, in which these things are wanting. Do you labour to get near God in prayer, and press forward to obtain that.

#### DIRECT. X.

As you have *ability* and *opportunity*, let works of *charity* and *mercy* be joined with your *fast*; doing them, whither in the time of it, or before it, or after it; *Isa. lviii. 6. Is*

*not this the fast that I have chosen? — Ver. 7. — To deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out, to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Let the poor be gainers by your fast: for it is the promise of God, that he that watereth, shall be watered also himself, Prov. xi. 25. and one's finding mercy with God, natively issues in a merciful disposition towards one's fellow-creatures, Mat. xviii. 33. Eph. iv. 32.*

## D I R E C T. XI.

Before you give over your work, you will do well to consider seriously, that you are now the Lord's. and no more your own: and forasmuch as your covenanting with God, supposeth that you are resolved to reform, and to walk more closely with God, lay down resolutions in the strength of your covenanted God, to watch. And by all means, forget not to consider, what are these things, whereby, in a special manner, your spiritual condition hath formerly been worsted; and, by what means it may be kept right: and sincerely resolve to shun the one, and pursue the other; that so, what gaps have been in your conversation, may be filled up, whereby it will appear, that by your fast, you have been set forward in your Christian course. And withal, review your failures in all the parts of the exercise you have now been employed in.

## D I R E C T. XII.

You may conclude the work with prayer, wherein you may humbly confess your failures in the management of this duty, and apply anew to the blood of sprinkling for purging them away; avouch your covenant interest in God, and his in you; and lay the causes of your fast again before him, and solemnly leave them on him. The laying over a matter on the Lord believingly, in prayer, gives great ease to a burdened heart; it turns a fast sometimes into a spiritual feast. When *Hannah* had done so with her case, *she went away, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad, 1 Sam. i. 18.* And lay over

yourself upon him, for the grace of the covenant, to subdue your corruptions, bear you up against temptations, and carry on your resolutions; that you may go out into the world again, in the faith of his grace sufficient for you in all exigencies.

## D I R E C T. XIII.

When the work is over, take heed to your spirit. And,

*First*, Beware of spiritual pride. Do not value yourself upon the account of the work done, as they did, who said, *Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not?* *Isa.* lviii. 3. The opinion of the merit of good works, is what the heart of man goes easily oft into, by its natural bias: and there is so much of the *old man* in the best, that they are apt to think highly of their religious performances and services. Wherefore be on your guard, particularly on that side; and consider the perfection required by the holy law, and keep in view your own mismanagements, so as *when you shall have done all those things*, you may be obliged to say, *We are unprofitable servants*, *Luke* xvii. 10.

*Secondly*, Beware of *carnal security*. Saints sometimes fall asleep, quickly after a full meal of spiritual enjoyment; as it fared with the Spouse, *Cant.* i. 2. And Satan watching the advantage, rallies his scattered forces, and with his wounded men burns the city. So it comes to pass, that, according to Solomon's observe, *Prov.* xii. 27, *The slothful roasteth not that which he took in hunting*. What was gathered with much pains, is lost through unwatchfulness, ere he gets the use of it.

*Lastly*, Beware of forgetting the causes of your fast: but, in your ordinary addresses to God, remember them; and wait on for an answer, *Psal.* v. 3. *I will direct my prayers unto thee, and will look up*. Prayers may be accepted, and yet not presently answered. In which case, it is necessary that with patience we wait for a return from heaven, mean while using the appointed means for obtaining the end. The neglecting hereof may provoke the Lord, to continue the symptoms of his anger, or stroke of his hand, which otherwise might sooner be removed; and



to leave one perplexed and embarrassed in matters where in light is needed.

But in your waiting for light, whatever the sovereign Lord *may* do, do not look for impressions, far less for voices, nor *extraordinary revelation* any manner of way, to discover your *duty* in particular cases, 2 *Pet.* i. 18. 19. But having laid yourself fairly open to the divine determination, and made humble and earnest supplication unto God for light in your particular case, believe that you shall be guided, taught, and directed by him, according to his promise, *Psalms* xxv. 9. *Prov.* iii. 6. And then, in dependance on the Lord, weigh the matter and circumstance in the balance of sanctified reason, according to the general directions of the word, such as *Philip.* iv. 8. *Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.* And carefully observe the conduct and motions of Providence, with reference to it, still comparing them with the word. And you will find, that he will guide you with his *eye*, according to the promise, *Psalms* xxxii. 8. And with respect thereto, you may put up that petition unto him, in faith, *Psalms* lxxxvi. 17, *Shew me a token for good.*

Thus far of personal fasting and humiliation,

### C H A P. III.

*Of FAMILY-FASTING and Humiliation, in particular,*

W<sup>H</sup>erein the substance of this duty, which is the same in all religious fasts whatsoever, doth consist, is already declared. And there being many things common to *family fasts*, with *personal* ones, of which we have treated at large; it remains only to add here some few things peculiar to *family fasting*. And,

FIRST, As to the *Divine Warrant* for it, one may be satisfied upon these grounds,

*First*, Forasmuch as every Christian *family* ought to be a church, *Rom. xvi. 5.* to receive all ordinances appointed of God, and competent to them in their *family* capacity; and that religious fasting is an ordinance of divine appointment, in the nature whereof there is nothing to hinder its being performed by a *family*, in their *family* capacity: it is evident, that *family-fasting* and *humiliation*, is a part of *family worship*; namely, an *extraordinary* part thereof, to be *occasionally* performed. Accordingly, it is promised as an effect of the pouring out of the Spirit, *Zech. xii. 12. The land shall mourn, every family apart.* We have also a plain instance of it, in *Esther's* family, on the occasion of the mischievous decree against the *Jews*, procured by *Haman*, *Esth. iv. 16. I also and my maidens will fast likewise.* And the fasting of the *Jews*, on the same occasion, in *every province whithersoever that decree came*, mentioned, *Ver. 3.* seems to have been mostly, if not altogether, of the same kind, to wit, *family-fasting*; not only, in respect of their circumstances in these provinces, where they were dispersed, *Chap. iii. 8.* but also, that the thanksgiving for their deliverance was appointed to be *kept throughout every family*, *Chap. ix. 28.*

*Secondly*, The ground upon which the duty of fasting and humiliation is bound upon publick worshipping societies, and upon particular persons, take place also in the case of families. If national, congregational, and personal sins to be mourned over, judgments to be deprecated, and mercies to be sought, do sound a call to a nation, congregation, or person, respectively, to humble themselves with fasting; Can there be any reason assigned, why the same should not hold in like manner, in the case of families? surely, as there are times wherein it goes ill with a land, or with a particular congregation or person; so there are times, wherein *it goes evil with one's house*, *1 Chron. vii. 23.* in respect of special *family-sins* or *strokes*; and in which there are special *family-mercies* needed. And families are obliged to the using of the same appointed means for getting rid of the one, and obtaining the other; as other worshipping societies, and particular persons are, in their respective cases. And where the concern of mem-

bers of a family is common, altho' it be not equal, all of them ought, in reason, to take part of the burden.

*Lastly*, The promise made to joint prayers, hath weight here, *Mat. xviii. 19. If two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. Ver. 20. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.* It is certain, there is such a thing as *extraordinary prayer*, which hath a share in the benefit of this promise: and if the Lord is pleased to lay such a weight on some of his people, their agreeing together to ask a thing of him, or their sounding together, as the word properly signifies; it is not to be doubted, but *extraordinary prayer* in families, upon some special occasions, is both required by him, and acceptable unto him, through Jesus Christ his Son.

SECONDLY, As for a providential call to *family fasting* and *humiliation*; by what is said before, for clearing of one's call to personal fasting, it may be judged of and discerned; the circumstances of the *family* being duly considered, and what the conduct of Providence towards it appears to point unto. The case of others, in whom the *family* hath a particular concern, especially the case of the church, may found a call to *family fasting*; as is clear from the practice of *Esther* with her maids, *Esth. iv. 16.* And so may the private case of the *family* itself; whether in respect of *family-sins*, *family-strokes* threatned or inflicted, on some special *family-mercies* to be desired. And since the exemplification of these general heads, in one's private case, made in the second section of the foregoing chapter, may without difficulty be accomodated to the case of one's *family*, by persons of the meanest capacity disposed to consider them; it is not necessary here to descend to particulars again.

LASTLY, For *directions* towards *family fasting*; there are but few that need to be added unto these given before, in the case of personal fasting. It is plain from the nature of the thing, that the external ordering and management of this matter belongs to the head of the *family*: and he or she is discreetly to choose and appoint the time and place, wherein the *family* may perform the duty with



least disturbance; and to see, that all be done *decently* and *in order*. And,

*First*, Let the head of the *family*, some competent time, at least the night before, give notice to them, that such a time is set apart for, and to be spent in that exercise; and withal shew them the causes of it, and exhort them to stir up themselves to the duties of such a solemn approach unto God. Common prudence will direct, as well as Christian duty doth oblige, the husband to consult his wife beforehand, as to the fixing of the time to be set apart in the *family* for that extraordinary piece of devotion.

*Secondly*, In the morning, let each member of the *family* go apart by himself into some secret place, and there spend some time in *reviewing, confessing, covenanting, praying, and supplicating*, as directed in the case of personal fasting; so far as he can overtake them. The more conscienciously this secret work is managed, it will readily fare the better with the *family*, when met together.

*Thirdly*, Let the head of the *family*, having taken to himself, and allowed to them, a competent time for their extraordinary secret devotions, thereafter call them together. And the *family* being convened, he may again, if need be, lay before them the causes of their fast, with suitable exhortations and encouragements, for exciting them unto the duty. And, after calling on God for the aid of his holy Spirit, let him sing with them some Psalm, or part of a Psalm, suitable to such an occasion, such as *Psalm lxxx. 1.* and downwards, *Psalm xxxix. 6.* to the end, *Psalm li. 1.* and downwards; read before them some pertinent passage of Scripture, such as these mentioned in the VI. *direction* of the preceeding Chapter; and then pray with them. After prayer made by the head of the family, let the mistress of the family, and such others as he judgeth fit, pray, one after another. 'Tis very desirable, that each member of the family, being thro' grace, fit to be employ'd, do take a part in that work. In the intervals of prayer, there may be singing, reading, or conference, as may be found most expedient.

*Fourthly*, 'Tis fit that, in these prayers, there be extraordinary confession of sin, as particular as may be ex-

pedient; together with profession of repentance, and hearty sorrow for sin, and of unfeigned desire to return unto God, and unto the duties of a Christian life: and then, fervent and earnest supplications, upon the matter, that are the peculiar causes of the fast.

*Fifthly*, It is proper, that the concluding prayer be made by the head of the family: and that therein he resume the confessions, professions, and supplications on the matters of the fast; humbly acknowledge their failures in the management of the work; and profess their looking for pardon and acceptance thro' the blood of Jesus Christ alone, and also for grace to walk in the ways of new obedience, thro' the same atoning blood. Then the joint exercise may be closed, with singing some part of a *Psalm*, such as, *Psalm*. xc. 13. to the end, *Psalm*. lxxxv. 6. to the end, or *Psalm*. lxxix. 30. and downward.

*Lastly*, The joint exercise of the family being over, let each of them go apart by himself again, and spend some time in a review of what they have been employed in, and in secret prayer: the which is but a suitable conclusion to such solemn work. And family-reformation ought to follow hereupon; every member of the family watching over himself, and all of them watching, one over another: that by their holy walking, in peace and unity, and a conscientious performance of their *relative duties*, it may appear, that they have been *sincere* and *upright* before the Lord, in their fast.

### The CONCLUSION.

AND now, to recommend the practice of these duties, to persons and families, these five things are offered in favour thereof; namely, that the practice of them is a proper means, (1) To bring strangers to religion, acquainted with it; (2) To recover backsliders; (3) To prevent relapses; (4) To prepare for a time of trial; and *lastly*, To get matters clear for eternity.

*FIRST*, The practice of personal and family-fasting and humiliation is a proper means to bring strangers to religion acquainted with it: that these, who have not yet dipt into practical religion, may begin to enter into it. The

work of conversion unto God, begins at solemn serious consideration of one's own spiritual state and case: the which, if sinners could once be brought unto, there would be some hope of them, as of the prodigal, when *he came to himself*, Luke xv. 17. And if they would set themselves to the duty of personal-fasting, and masters of families would now and then use family-fasts, they might at length be brought to consider of their spiritual state and case. Wherefore,

*First*, Ye who are young, and have not yet dipt into the heart of religion, this memorial is for you. 'Tis presumed, ye were baptized in your infancy, and that now ye are come to the years of discretion: but have you ever as yet taken a solemn deliberate view of your lost and undone state by nature, under sin and the curse; and of the remedy provided for you in JESUS CHRIST? And have you ever as yet personally entered into covenant with God, by taking hold of his covenant of grace? You eat, you drink, you sleep, you work, you play or divert yourselves: and so do young beasts too, the which, when they are dead, are done: but you have an immortal soul, that must eternally live happy in heaven, or miserable in hell. It may be, you say your prayers too: but have you as yet personally renounced the devil, the vain world, and the flesh? You cannot but see, that death seizeth some as young and *sprightly* as you are; and you know not how soon God may call you off? Have you then laid your measures for eternity? Alas! you are heedlessly running about the devil's trap, playing yourselves about the pit's mouth: and should your foot slip now, you are undone for ever. *Thus saith the Lord of hosts, consider your ways.*

*Secondly*, Careless sinners, careless about the concerns of the other world, whatever your age or years be; this memorial is for you. *Ye careless ones, strip ye and make ye bare, and gird sackcloth upon your loins, Isa. xxxii. 11.* What is your religion? Is it not like the foam on the water, no substance in it? What is your life and conversation? See your own picture, *Jer. ii. 24. A wild ass used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure.* What condition is your soul in? The emblem of it is the sluggard's vineyard, *All grown over with thorns, nettles cover-*



*ing the face thereof, and the stone-wall thereof broken down, Prov. xxiv. 30, 31.* Can you really persuade yourselves, that you are *going forth by the footsteps of the flock*? That the saints now in glory took the sinful liberty of thinking, speaking, and acting, that *you* do? That their soul's state and case cost them as few serious thoughts as yours hath cost you? Do you think to stumble on a saving interest in Christ, a pardon, a heaven? no, you will not find it so, Up, then, and be doing: set apart some time for considering of, and doing something effectually in, your soul's case; that you may go to the ground of the matter, and get it rectified.

SECONDLY, 'Tis a proper means for the recovery of backsliders, that they may *remember whence they are fallen, and repent, and do the first works*, Rev. ii. 5. There are not a few, who some time a day bloomed fair, in hopeful beginnings of religion, who are now withered. Their *bones are dried*, and there's no sap of that kind in them now: and by their sinning against light, they have provoked God to depart from them, so as there is no sap in ordinances, nor in providences, to them, neither; but these are all, as it were, blasted to them, and they are left in the unhappy case of the vineyard, *Isa. v. 6. I will also command the clouds, that they rain no rain upon it.* And some are not only withered, but are become noisome in their life and conversation: they have not only lost any life of religion they sometimes seem'd to have; but their lusts are become rampant in them, as given up to vile affections, defiling the very outward man. *It has happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire*, 2 Pet. ii. 22.

O backsliders! your case is a fearful one, *Heb. x. 38, If any man draw back, my soul shall have now pleasure in him.* What mind ye to do with it? Will ye continue in it, to your eternal ruin? Oh! no, pity your own souls. There's *hope in Israel concerning this thing*, as bad as it is. Perhaps your heart tells you, That your case is now gone on too far, to be mended: but it is not so; that's but a satanical suggestion. God's word says otherwise, *Jer. iii. 1, Tho' thou hast played the harlot with many*

lovers, yet return again to me, saith the Lord, *Isa. liv. 6.* I have called the as—a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. Wherefore, O backslider, beseech thyself to answer the Lord's call; and remember that some devils go not out but by prayer and fasting, *Matth. xvii. 22.* Try this method then for your recovery: try it, as you would not be guilty of wilful dying of your disease. Our heavenly Father kindly meets returning prodigals: the returning backslider will be treated by him as a dear son, a pleasant child, *Jer. xxxi. 20.* Return ye then, and he will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, *Joel ii. 25.* And as yet, your bones shall flourish like an herb, *Isa. xli. 14.*

THIRDLY, It is a proper means to prevent relapses, and to keep one's spiritual case right, when once it is right. Frequent stating of accounts, keeps matters clear, which otherwise might come to be perplexed and involved. And the case which, being on the decline, is taken in time, is easily righted, in comparison of that which has long run on; even as when Christ raised to life the young man of *Nain*, whom they were carrying out to the grave, he only touched the bier, and said, *Young man, I say unto thee arise, Luke vii. 14.* but he weeped and groaned once and again at the raising of *Lazarus*, who had been four days dead, *John xi. 33, 35, 38.* The unhealthy and sickly disposition of the souls of men, by reason of the remains of corruption that are always in the best, while here, makes the occasional performance of extraordinary duties now and then necessary, over and above the course of their ordinary and stated devotions.

FOURTHLY, 'Tis a proper means of preparation for a time of trial. It is a piece of christian prudence to foresee the evil, and hide one's self, while the simple pass on and are punished, *Prov. xxii. 3.* When God is threatening a land with his judgments, it becomes the inhabitants to take the alarm, and prepare to meet their God: and personal and family fasts are proper expedients for that end; since they who in sinning times sigh and cry for all the abominations done in the midst thereof, stand fair to receive the mark for special favours in suffering times, *Ezek. ix. 4.* For all the lesser strokes and deliver-

ances, these nations have met with of late years, it is, alas ! visible to sober men of whatever denomination, that we are not thereby reformed, nor duly convinced of, far less humbled under, the causes of God's flaming controversy with us. And while there is a God to judge on the earth, we can have no reason to think, that a generation chargeable with the guilt which we are chargeable with, is in safety with such a load upon them: but that either God will, by an unordinary pouring out of his Spirit, awaken, humble, and make the land to mourn; or else, by some rousing stroke of judgment, will vindicate his own honour, injured to a pitch that our fathers arrived not at. And the less appearance there is of the former, there is the greater appearance of the latter. However we seem to have no such security against it, as to render it unseasonable to keep personal and family fasts in that view; that we may mourn over our own sins, and the sins of the nation, and may solemnly commit ourselves and our families to the Divine grace, mercy, and protection, whatever may be the occurrences of Providence in our day. None know what dark steps may be between them and the grave: and therefore it cannot be an unwise course, timely to take God in Christ for our guide thro' the mountains of darkness, for our Protector in all dangers, and for our Supporter and Helper in the midst of trouble.

*Lastly*, It is a proper means to get matters clear for eternity, and so to make us a safe and comfortable passage out of this world. It was *David's* unspeakable comfort on his death-bed, that he could say of the God unto whom his spirit was about to return, *He hath made with me an everlasting covenant*, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. *Jacob*, being an old man, and a-dying, comfortably reflected on the place and time, where and when, in the days of his youth, he had remarkable communion with God, received the blessing, and vowed the vow, Gen. xlviii. 3. with Ch. xxxviii. 10—22. Would one be in a condition to look death in the face, to pass safely and comfortably to the other world; there is not a more feasible means to reach it than this. Therefore,

*First*, Ye who are under doubts and fears, complain-



ing, that ye can never reach clear evidences for heaven; this *Memorial* is for you. No wonder they walk in the dark, who will not be at so much pains to get light into their state. The obtaining of such light, might of itself be a sufficient ground for such an exercise. Clear evidences for heaven are such an unspeakable comfort, and so hard to rise up amidst so much corruption of heart and life, that it is not at all strange, they require something beyond the ordinary course of devotion and application, to obtain the same. And this is a most feasible means, for that purpose: for, after one has got his soul humbled by a review of his sins, hath poured out his heart before the Lord in solemn confession of sin, and personally entered into, or renewed, covenant with God, by taking hold of God's covenant of Grace; if he shall then take the matter in hand, and examine himself, as to the evidences of grace in him, they will then be as likely to appear clear, as ever.

*Secondly*, Ye who are one way or other, getting warning of approaching death, this *Memorial* is for you. Do you observe your equals in years, or younger than you, carried off by death? Have you been at any time rescued from imminent danger of your life, arising from some accident, or unforeseen occurrence? Are you now and then visited with sickness? Do you perceive your strength begin to fail, the pins of your tabernacle begin to be loosened? These and the like are loud providential calls to you, to prepare for the other world. And preparation for that world, is sufficient to sound a call unto such extraordinary devotion: a prospect of approaching death, may well be allowed to call one to set some time apart, in order to prepare for it. Preparation for death is work to be done in time of health: and why should it be delayed, since you see that death is approaching? How unreasonable is it for men, to leave that work to the sick-bed, where they'll have enough ado to die, or may be deprived of their judgment, if they do at all get a sick-bed, and be not suddenly snatch'd away, ere they or their friends are aware? No, Sirs; ye know that death is coming: therefore, while you are able, set some time apart for that very end, to prepare for it, and to state matters clearly for e-

ternity: otherwise, ye are cruel to your own souls, by your negligence, making of death, a leap in the dark into the other world.

*Lastly*, All without exception, who believe a heaven and a hell, this *Memorial* is for you. The eternal state is not a matter to venture upon at random. If you do really believe a life to come, ye cannot reasonably think, that this is too much to make a suitable preparation for it: their hearts are certainly more stout, than holy, who, amidst so many instances of mortality, as the world is still affording, are not thereby excited to set their own soul's case in order, with an eye to death's coming about to their own door: and thus to set some time apart for that end, is little enough in a case of such vast importance.



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